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# THE HOLY PANCHAKSHARA

PART FOUR

2-b

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2549
Q23

SRI-LA-SRI PANDRIMALAI SAMIKAL

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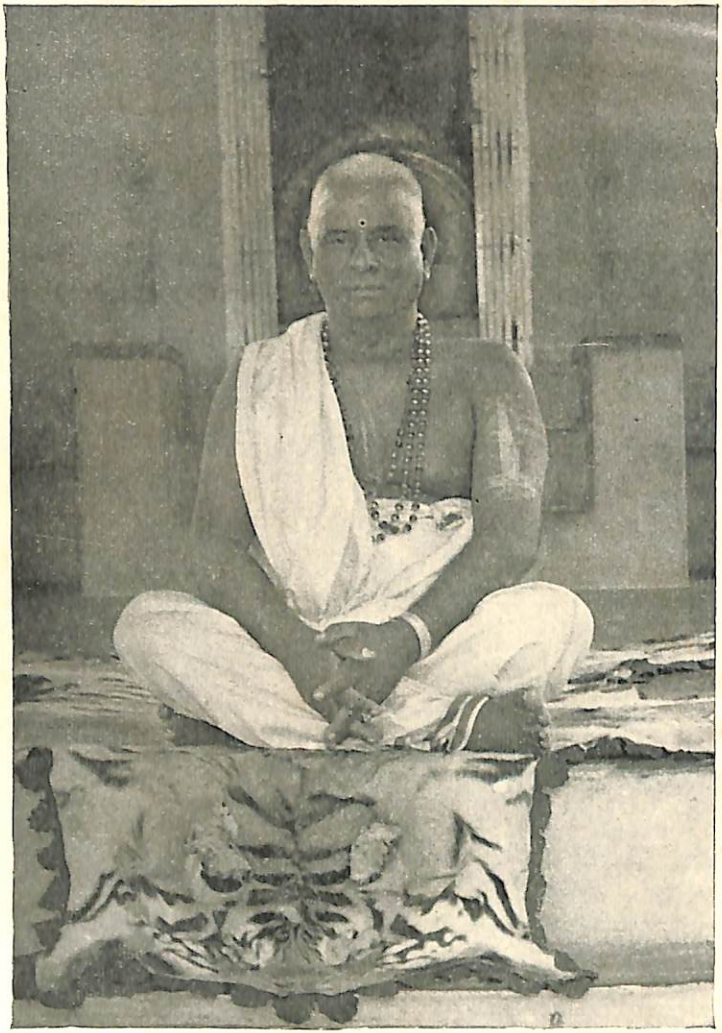

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2-b

# THE HOLY PANCHAKSHARA

PART IV

2549

Divine Articles Materialised by
AASAAN SADGURU
SRI-LA-SRI PANDRIMALAI SWAMIGHAL

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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Since publishing "The Holy Panchakshara" – Parts I, II & III, twenty–seven more Divine Articles materialised by Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal are now presented in "The Holy Panchakshara " – Part IV.

The Publisher is thankful to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the Editorial Board of "The Light of Pandrimalai" for permitting publication of these Articles which have appeared from time to time in "Bhavan's Journal" and "The Light of Pandrimalai".

The life and mission of Aasaan Sadguru Swamighal have been described in detail in Parts I & III of "The Holy Panchakshara". A short sketch is reproduced below for the benefit of the readers.

His Holiness Swamighal is a standing example of a Jeevan Mukta (Perfected Soul) in constant communion with Lord Sri Muruga, his Ishta Devata, whose Divine Grace permeates fully in him.

His holy mission is to alleviate the sufferings of humanity and to guide devotees and aspirants on the onward march for spiritual upliftment, at the same time securing in the righteous way their material well being also.

True to the divine prediction before his birth, His Holiness bears various divine birth- marks on his holy feet, palms and body.

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On the sole of the left foot is seen the divine marks of Sudarsana Chakra (the Wheel of Lord Sri Vishnu) and the Shakti Vel (Spear of Lord Sri Muruga) and on the sole of the right foot, the Chakra and the Conch (of Lord Sri Vishnu). The palm of the left hand bears the marks of Conch, Chakra, the Cock emblem of Lord Sri Muruga and Shakti Vel. On the right palm is seen the Conch, Chakra, the Flag of Lord Sri Muruga, Shadkonam and an inner Shakti Vel within a Vel. On his body the birth marks of Chakra on the right shoulder and the Conch on the left shoulder indicate Lord Sri Vishnu's Amsa. On his back the Flag and the Cock emblem of Lord Sri Muruga are imprinted. A tiny dot noticed during the birth, between the eye-brows, represents the "third eye" (of Lord Siva). Later as he grow older and in consequence of his intense tapas and spiritual sadhana, this mark has grown much bigger and deeper for any one to see and revere.

These divine insignia proclaim that His Holiness has the Amsas of Siva, Shakti, Vishnu and Muruga all in him and is verily an Avatara Purusha.

Swamighal lays great store for temple worship. He has consecrated many temples in India by installing yantras for deities which release and radiate spiritual forces for the worshippers to derive great benefit.

In recent years, temples have been built and consecrated, under the guidance and directions of Swamighal, in foreign countries also.

During 1976, His Holiness toured South Africa. There, at Natal, he installed Lord Sri Nataraja's idol with yantras and consecrated the temple.

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The Hindu Temple Society of North America had the unique opportunity of approaching His Holiness for the construction of Lord Sri Ganesa's temple at New York and Lord Sri Venkateswara's temple at Pittsburgh. This project was inaugurated by Swamighal at Hyderabad during 1974. After three years of puja for forty-two yantras divinely procured for these two temples, His Holiness was taken to United States during 1977. He performed the consecration of the New York temple on 4–7–1977 and the Pittsburg temple on 6–7–1977. During his stay in the United States, His Holiness performed the ground-breaking ceremony for Balaji's temple at Vappinger's Falls, Shakti's temple at Housten and Shakti's temple at Florida.

On his return journey to India, His Holiness did the consecration of Lord Sri Muruga's temple on 31–8–1977 in London.

There is no doubt that these temples will become powerful centres of divine forces that will result in the moral and spiritual upliftment and regeneration of mankind.

In the history of divine miracles and siddhis, the immediate and instant materialisation of type-written articles in English on various topics of religious and spiritual import to gratify the desires of disciples, is something unheard of. These articles materialised by His Holiness Swamighal, due to their very divine nature, would leave their indelible imprints on the sands of Time. Such articles would also form a powerful spiritual substratum for educating and guiding the entire mankind, with out any distinction of caste, creed, colour or status, towards leading a more purposeful and fuller life,

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here and now, established in Service, Truth, Love and everlasting Bliss.

The Publisher is grateful to Hon. Justice Dr. M. M. Ismail Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, for writing fitting "Forword" to this book and also to Hon. Thiru R. M. Veerappan, Minister for Information and Hindu Religious Endowments Board, Tamil Nadu for kindly releasing this book on the august occasion of the Birthday Celebrations of Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigha!, on the 4th of May, 1981, at Madras.

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# FOREWORD

This Part IV of Holy Panchakshara contains twenty-seven articles. These articles, from the very nature of the case, deal with religious and spiritual matters. Some of them are of general nature and some others deal with the life and teachings of some 'Alwars' and 'Nayanmars'.

The strangest thing of these articles is their origin, Normally, an article is written by a human-being. It contains his thoughts, suggestions and impressions. However, the origin of these articles is strange and striking. Unless one was present at the birth of these articles, it would be difficult to believe the said origin.

The last but one of the articles contained in this book has the title 'Kurumba Nayanar'. I had the good fortune to be present at the time when this article was materialised on March 25, 1981. Shri Pandrimalai Swamighal stood outside his pooja room and prayed for such an article. Within an instant, one typewritten sheet flew into the out-stretched hands of Swamiji. I was just standing in front of him with out-stretched hands and Swamiji placed that sheet in my hands. Thereafter, I read out the contents of that sheet, which are in English, to Swamiji and explained to him the same in Tamil.

Having known Swamiji for a few months, I cannot believe that the sudden appearance of the sheet of paper can be the result of any trickery. There is also another

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aspect of the matter. Swamiji does not know English; nor does he know Sanskrit. Even in Tamil he cannot be said to be a deep and erudite scholar. But the article contains a Sanskrit passage with transliteration in English. This itself is proof positive of the fact that the article is not of Swamiji. Hence, one thing that is definite is that the same is not of an oridinarily understood or known origin. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, is that the sheet of paper appeared as a result of the intense prayer of swamiji. In fact, I can vouch-safe for the said intensity. When Swamiji stood thus and uttered a prayer-song, his entire frame was shaking and the vibrations that went through his whole body were something which one cannot ordinarily perceive. The vibrations and the shaking of the frame of the body of Swamiji were so intense and severe that I feared that Swamiji might collapse any movement. However, the said intensity strengthened the faith of Swamiji in the prayer and brought forth the sheet of paper.

I brooded over what happened. It is the birthpangs of a woman that bring forth a baby. Similarly, it is the pangs of a Baktha that bring forth such miracles.

Swamiji does not really believe in miracles. He has told me, more than once, that the miracles are comparatively matters of insignificance; they are meant only to attract the uninformed towards God and arouse their faith in God and for those who are learned and who are capable of thinking and ratiocination, miracles have neither relevance nor validity. What makes such persons pious, religious and God-conscious is the contemplation of nature, their own birth and death, the relentless operation of the divine law and justice and the beautiful orderliness that pervades the entire Universe.

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Then, what is it that is responsible for making Swamiji as a Guru for so many thousands of people, who look to him for help and guidance? The one thing to which this can be attributed is his intense 'bakthi'.

There are certain persons who are born in the world with certain endowed gifts of divine grace. Swamiji is one such. In addition to these naturally endowed gifts he had come across, at a very early age, one or two realised souls, whose contact had awakened in Swamiji his own divine instincts. These, in course of time, manifested themselves in the form of helping, guiding and blessing others. Over and above all these, his inimitable simplicity and earnestness and sincerity in the welfare of all those who come into contact with him, single him out as a man of great grace and kindness.

In view of the extraordinary origin of these articles, certainly they cannot deal with trivial and mundane things, but can deal with only things religious and spiritual, trying to elevate the mind and the spirit of the readers. Though, having regard to the religion of Swamighal and his own devotion to Lord Muruga and other Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon, the articles have the complexion of the Hindu Puranas and Ithihasas and theology and theories, yet any discerning person can read and discover from them an underlying current of a common concept of divinity which generally will not be opposed to the religious beliefs and principles of other persuasions.

I have no doubt that this publication will add to the existing religious and spiritual literature and thereby contribute to the advancement of an attitude of humility, piety and service in the minds of the readers.

Madras
April 28, 1981

M. M. ISMAIL

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# POST SCRIPT

On the evening of April 28, 1981, Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran came to my residence to collect the above foreword. I asked them whether materialisation of Tamil typewritten article was not possible. They told me that till then only English typewritten articles had been materialised; that Tamil articles had materialised only in manuscript and that to their knowledge no Tamil typewritten article had been materialised. We discussed as between ourselves that having regard to the origin of these articles, materialisation of Tamil typewritten articles could not be impossible; once the articles are not written by a human agency and they are of higher origin resulting from intense prayer, it should be possible to get Tamil typewritten articles also. Having regard to the very great respect and devotion they had towards Swamiji, they just mentioned to me that they themselves might not ask Swamiji about the same as it would be presumptuous on their part and that I might ask Swamiji about it. I thought within myself that it should not be impossible to have a Tamil typewritten article materialised and as a matter of fact, it should be possible to have an article materialised in any language and in any form, as the Baktha prays for.

On the evening of 29th April 1981, I had been to meet Swamiji. Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran were also there, but they were sitting at a distance. I myself was not definite at that time whether I should ask Swamiji about this. However, in the course of my conversation with Swamiji, I asked him whether it was not

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possible to get a Tamil typewritten article. After a few moments' pause, Swamiji told me that it was possible to get an article typewritten in any language and that in fact one could hear the typing sound itself. He further stated that he would pray for such articles being made available in all the languages. I told Swamiji that if the articles are of divine origin, it must be possible to get the same in any language, since it cannot be said that God knows only one language and not the other. Swamiji agreed with me. He was in deep contemplation for a few minutes, which I was able to perceive obviously. I did not want to talk to Swamiji further so as not to interfere with his meditation, but I was confident that something was going to happen. Suddenly Swamiji got up from his seat, went into the Pooja room very briskly and closed the same. At that time I was able to hear the tearing and flying of a few sheets of paper. Swamiji opened the door and three Tamil typewritten sheets were in his hands which he handed over to me. It was captioned "Vasi Yogam – 21".

Immediately Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan and Thiru R. N. Sankaran were summoned and in their presence I read out the articles to Swamiji. The article was in very chaste and appropriate Tamil dealing with "Vasi-Yogam". All of us were immensely pleased and surprised.

The article purported to be a continuation of an earlier article, and in the third sheet, it is also typed "to be continued". I asked Thiru R. N. Sankaran who is familiar with the earlier articles, about the article in question being the continuation of an earlier one. He stated that the earlier articles were already published as "Vasi Yogam 1 to 20" in 'Bhagya Bharani' which stopped publication and they are being republished in "Light of Pandrimalai".

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So far Vasi Yogam 1 to 18 had been republished and he had requested Swamiji for "Vasiyogam – 21". Swamiji himself had told Thiru Sankaran that those articles were in manuscript.

Swamiji told me that he prayed to Lord Muruga whether He would give a Tamil typewritten article and He agreed to do so; and this took place when he was in meditation ; only after he got this permission he went into the Pooja room to get the article.

I am mentioning this only for the purpose of showing that the materialisation of such articles cannot be the result of any pre-meditated or deliberate attempt at trickery.

Subsequent to our meeting at my residence on the evening of 28th April 1981, Thiru A. G. Sivaramakrishnan had not met Swamiji. Thiru R. N. Sankaran, though he met Swamiji, had not mentioned to Swamiji as to what we talked at my residence on the evening of 28th April 1981. Hence what happened on the evening of 29th April 1981, happened on the spur of the moment, Swamiji himself not being earlier aware of my suggestion and request to him and he himself not contemplating materialisation of any such article.

There is one significant fact which must be mentioned at this stage. When I was talking to Swamiji that evening, I asked him whether there was any particular time or day; for materialisation of such articles. Swamiji's reply was significant. It was: There was no particular time or day; but he cannot command the Lord to give him an article and he will have to pray to the Lord for such an article and it is left to the Lord to comply with the prayer or not. He further mentioned a most telling analogy, namely, "If

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you are asking for some money from a rich man, he is not likely to ask you to come the next day or the day after, as if he will have to arrange for the amount and in the same manner, when the Lord is Omnipotent – powerful – the moment you pray to Him for something and your prayer deserves His grace, He gives it immediately and there is no question of postponing the same or fixing a date for the same.

MADRAS
30–4–81

M. M. ISMAIL

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# BHAKTAVAAKPAALAKA KRISHNA

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*

Lord Krishna is *Bhaktavaakpaalaka Krishna*. He sees to it that the word given out by his devotee never comes to nought. He looks after his devotee carefully and carries out his behest to the full. He protects the devotee under all circumstances. He himself told Arjuna:

*"Apichetsuduraachaaro bhajate maamananyabhaak*
*Saadhureva samantavyah samyagvyasitohisah*
*Kshiprambhavati dharmaatmaa sasvacchaantim nigacchati*
*Kaunteya pratijaanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati"*

The Lord said: "Even the worst and vilest fellow, if he were to concentrate his mind on me without any other thought, has to be regarded as a holy man for he is sure to get reformed and attain salvation. His mind will be turned towards *dharma* and he will be put well on the way to self-realisation. So. O Son of Kunti! Swear that no devotee of mine will ever come to grief and be destroyed."

The Lord had stated here with all the emphasis at his command that his devotee shall never get ruined. This statement of the Lord was borne out in the case of his devotee par excellence Arjuna himself. By teaching the Celestial Song he made Arjuna keep right on his duty as a *kshatriya* and do battle with the Kauravas to establish *dharma*. The Mahabharata war could be won above all

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only through the divine grace of Lord Krishna showered on Arjuna and the Pandavas. As it is said in the following inimitable words without the Lord's guidance the Pandavas could not have won the war.

*"Bheeshma Drona tataa Jayadrahtha jalaa Gaandhaara neelotpalaa*
*Salya graahavatee Krupenavahinee Karnenavelaakulaa*
*Aswatthaama Vikarna ghoramakaraa Duryodhanaa vritinee*
*Sotteernaakhalu Paandavai Rana nadee kaivartake Kesave!"*

The Pandavas could ferry over the river of the battle of *Kurukshetra* which had the banks Drona and Bheeshma, the water Jayadratha, the fierce crocodile Salya, the flowing stream Krupa, the wave Karna, the terrible crocodiles Aswatthaama and Vikarna and the whirlpool Duryodhana only through the pilot Lord Krishna. The importance of Jayadratha known also as Saindhava is highlighted here as it was while conquering him that Lord Krishna had to see to it that Arjuna's oath had to be carried out. He became *Bhaktavaakpaalaka.*

Saindhava or Jayadratha was the husband of Dussala, the sister of the Kauravas. He was evil personified. He was the son of Vriddhakshatra, the king of Sindh. When he was born the Unseen Voice of the Sky declared that his head would be cut while unaware . On hearing it Vridhakshatra pronounced a curse that he who would cut the head of his son and make it fall on the ground would have his head broken into a thousand pieces. It so happened that Saindhava saw Draupadi in the sole control of the Ashram home with her husbands away on hunt in the forest through which he was passing. As none was there to oppose

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him except the purohit Dhaumya, he took her away in his chariot by force. The Pandavas came home and learning about the dastardly act of Saindhava went after him in fury. He was overpowered and Draupadi was rescued. Bheema wanted to kill him. Saindhava was in abject terror and prayed for clemency. Dharmaraja, the eldest of the Pandavas, took pity on him and ordered his brothers to release him for he was after all the husband of their own sister by relationship. The brothers did so, shaved his head, insulted him and set him free asking him to announce himself as *Pandava daasa* – the slave of the Pandavas. Saindhava felt greatly ashamed. He made a severe penance and propitiated Lord Mahadeva. He prayed to the Lord to make him powerful enough to defeat the Pandavas in battle. The Lord said that he would be able to defeat all the Pandavas excepting Arjuna on one day. Thus fortified he thought he was blessed and waited for on opportunity to avenge his defeat and teach a lesson to the Pandavas who had so humiliated him. He became a trump card in the hand of Duryodhana in the *Bharata yuddha*.

It so happened that Dronacharya, the preceptor of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas, was crowned commander of the Kaurava forces after the vanquishing of Bheeshma and he, in his own terrible way, vowed to seize Dharmaraja as a prisoner before sunset on the succeeding day. The Kauravas felt that the vow of Dronacharya could not be carried out if Arjuna were to be present on the battle field before him. So they planned to divert the attention of Arjuna to another battle field that day. They used the services of the *Samsaptaka* army consisting of veteran Yadava warriors trained in the art of warfare by Lord Krishna himself and arrayed on their side as promised by the Lord to Duryodhana before the start of the Bharata

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War. Only Arjuna could vanquish them and none else. Arjuna was accordingly held up in his devilish skirmish with the *Samsaptakas* while Dronacharya went about his work of taking Dharmaraja as a captive.

Dronacharya arranged the Kaurava army in lotus formation – *Padmavyooha* as it was called – rather difficult to be destroyed. The method by which the said formation could be wiped out was known only to Arjuna. Hidden from all his disciples, Dronacharya had told about it only to his favourite disciple Arjuna. Arjuna's son knew how to enter the formation and did not know how to get out of it; the fact was known to Dharmaraja. The battle raged fiercely. The *Vyooha* was invulnerable. So Dharmaraja asked Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna to enter it promising to follow him. The latter did so and fought his way in courageously. No one could stand against him. He was thereupon surrounded by all the reputed warriors of the Kaurava army. He gave battle to every one of them. The Pandavas headed by Bheema tried to go to his help. They were unable to do so as Saindhava stood against them. He was invincible that day on account of the boon given to him by Lord Siva. So Abhimanyu had to fight alone a fatal battle. He was killed by Saindhava. It became sunset and the battle was off for the day. Arjuna returned to his quarters. He was stunned with grief when he learnt about the uneven and cruel battle in which his son Abhimanyu lost his life. Knowing the cause to be Saindhava, in a fit of extreme rage, he vowed to kill Saindhava within sunset the next day failing which he would burn himself with his mighty bow *Gandeeva*.

This oath disturbed Lord Krishna. The Lord knew that the Kauravas would make an all out effort to save Saindhava and in case Arjuna were not to carry out his vow,

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the situation would turn out to be tragic. It would defeat the very purpose for which he had incarnated himself. Arjuna was his instrument for the secure establishment of *Dharma* in the world. So the Lord felt that he should be provided against all doubtful chances and see that his devotee's word held sway. So he gave orders to his charioteer Daruka to keep his chariot ready with all his weapons to be brought to him on his blowing his conch. This was in accordance to his dictum: *"Na Me bhaktah-pranasyati"* – "My devotee shall not come to grief."

The next day the battle was very severe and intense. Arjuna fought with all his might. With great determination he proceeded towards Saindhava, who was hidden in the midst of doughty warriors in the middle of the army. Arjuna made short work of every one that opposed him. It was nearing sunset and he was still away from his goal. Then Lord Krishna thought that the time came for his intervention. He set his discus against the sun so that an apparent darkness spread. Saindava thought that it became sunset and he came out of his hiding place. He was killed in a trice as the discus was removed and light ensued showing the sun still in the sky. Arjuna was asked by the Lord to use the *Paasupataasttra* to make the head of Saindhava fall into the lap of Saindhava's father who was doing penance. It was done and the old man pushed the head down to the ground. His head was broken into a thousand pieces as a result of his own curse. But for the Lord's strategem Arjuna could not have killed Saindhava and he should have ended his life. The Lord had taken upon himself the duty of carrying out the word of his devotee at all costs. Though he had said that he would not take up arms in that battle, he laid great store by his stand to save his devotee at any cost and he would even stretch his own word in that

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matter. He is prayed to as:

*"Akaala Sandhyaa ghatanas chakraantarita Bhaaskarah*
*Dushtapramadhanah Paartha pratignaaparipaalakah*
*Sindhuraaja sirahpaatasthaanavaktaavivekadruk."*

This aspect of the Lord's being the mainstay of his devotees through thick and thin had been brought to the fore even in the battle of Arjuna with the sterling devotee and warrior Bheeshma earlier. When the Lord felt that Arjuna was feeling the pinch in the battle with that grand old man and was unequal to the task, he himself thought of doing away with Bheeshma. He relented however when Arjuna prayed to him to desist from doing so and promising to fight better. Bheeshma said in this connection that the Lord had to take up arms against him because he had taken a vow to make the Lord take up weapons against him. It was the bounden duty of the Lord to gratify the sworn desires of his devotees and see that their words were fulfilled. Hence the apparent contradictions in his acts. He is *Bhaktavaakparipaalana Krishna:* we salute him who was: *"Brahma bodha paritraata Paartho Bheeshmaartha Chakrabhrut, Arjunaayaasa Vidhvamsee Kaaladamshtraavibhooshanah!* "He saved Arjuna by his teaching of Brahmavidya to him; took up the discus for carrying out the oath of Bheeshma; removed the troubles and travails of Arjuna; and was the typical Time Spirit with its decorative fierce teeth.'

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# THE GLORY OF KAVERI

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples.)*

The Lord Parameswara said to Bhagavati Parvati:

*"Sarvateertha mayo Vishnuhu Sarvasastramayam Prabhuhu*
*Sarvakratu mayo Vishnuhu Satyam Satyam Vadaa-myaham!"*

Lord Vishnu is manifest in all teerthas, in all Sastras and in all sacrifices. That is the Truth. So said the Lord.

Of these teerthas we invoke the following mentioned in the sloka at the beginning of every ritual.

*"Gangecha Yamunechaiva Krishne Godavari Sarasvathi*
*Narmade Sindhu Kaveri Jalesmin Sannidhim kuru!"*

The sacred waters of the holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna, Krishna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri are prayed for to be present in the sacred water of the vessel used for the ritual.

It is because Lord Vishnu is present in all these holy rivers the waters of these rivers are held in great sanctity.

Of these the Kaveri is highlighted for its efficacy on a par with Ganges, the Lord having promised Vibheeshana to be present in the Sree Ranga Kshetra washed by the sacred waters of the Kaveri for all time to come. He said that any

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one who bathes in the Kaveri in the month of Vaisakha on the full moon day aspected by the Star Visakha is sure to get salvation. Even now the Chiranjeevi Vibheeshana visits the shrine on that day and worships the Lord. The account of the origin of the Kaveri will reveal how it became so dear to the Lord.

Kaveri was the daughter of the Rajarishi Kavera. Kavera did penance to Lord Siva with a view to attaining salvation. Lord Siva directed him to meditate on Lord Brahma the creator. In course of time, Lord Brahma appeared before him and said: "I have got my daughter Vishnumaaya. She will be born to you and make you get salvation or freedom from the bondage of Samsara."

The Rajarishi was satisfied at the culmination of his penance. In due course, Vishnumaaya was born to him by the grace of Lord Brahma. She said that she would offer penance to Lord Siva, take the shape of a godly river and give redemption to her father. Thereupon she commenced her tapas in right earnest. In the meantime Lord Brahma appeared before the sage Agasthya and told him. "The daughter of Kavera is performing intense tapas concentrating on Lord Siva. You better marry her." The sage followed the instructions of Lord Brahma and went to Kaveri and asked her to marry him. She told him that she was going to assume the form of a river to give salvation to her father. Agasthya agreed to it, married her and kept her in his Kamandalam. The sage was entrusted with the divine mission of humbling the pride of the Vindhya mountain. So while on that mission he entrusted Kaveri to his disciples. It so happened that when they came to the vicinity of the Sahya mountain she remembered her divine mission, converted herself into a river and flowed by. The disciples requested her not to do so as their master would

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punish them. She allayed their fears saying that the sage knew her determination and so no harm would come to them. She became famous as the Ganges of the South. Lord Brahma and Lord Siva appeared before her and granted her all her requests which included salvation for her father and the eternal residence of Lord Mahavishnu in her. That was how Lord Ranganatha made his abode there for all time to come. Lopamudra, the wife of Agasthya, was her Amsa.

The greatness of Kaveri can be evident from the following episode. In Tretayuga, a king called Puranjaya ruled over Ayodhya. He ruled well for sometime; but out of greed he became evil minded and patronised thieves and robbers; he was so powerful that others were afraid to oppose him. Finally the ruler of Kanbheja made bold efforts to gather other rulers round him and made war on Puranjaya who had to run away into the forests with his family in abject terror. He lived in the forest and had the good fortune of a visit from the holy saint Maharishi Vasishta who advised him to perform the Kartika Vritha to propitiate Lord Vishnu. He did so and as a result got back his Kingdom. He ruled over the people wisely and properly leading a godly life. One day he was alone thinking deeply. He was wondering as to what vritha he had to perform, in what place and bathe in what holy river to attain salvation. Then he heard the Unseen Voice of the Sky tell him: "O King of Ayodhya! I shall clear your doubt. There is Sree Ranga kshetra on the banks of the Kaveri. It is the Vaikunta itself on the earth. Lord Ranganatha will be pleased with any one who bathes in the Kaveri and worships him. That person is sure to get salvation. So go there and do so. No other river has that power. Your sins can be burnt only by this act."

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On hearing these words Puranjaya immediately left keeping the kingdom under the control of his ministers and on reaching the Kaveri, had a holy dip in it. He worshipped Lord Ranganatha and prayed to him.

*"Brahmaadivandye Jagadekavandye Range Mukunde*
*Muditaaravinde*
*Govinda Devaakhiladevadeve Sree Ranga Deve*
*Namataanamaami!"*

"I salute the Lord of Sree Ranga who is worshipped by all gods beginning with Brahma, the Creator and by all in the Universe."

He performed ablutions and rituals in Kartika bathing in the Kaveri and got immense spiritual consolation and power. Ultimately he got salvation. The bath in Kaveri, specially favourable to all the devotees of the Lord Vishnu, is sure to purge any one of his or her sins and bestow salvation on the devotee.

Glory be unto the Kaveri which is Vishnumaaya in the shape of a sacred river!

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# SRI POODATTALWAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Swakarma phala nirdhishtaam*
*yaam yaam yonim vrajaamyaham*
*Tasyaam tasyaam Hrisheekesa!*
*Tvayi bhaktirdrudhastu Mey!"*

In whatever society and in whatever womb may I be born as a result of the deed performed by me, O Lord Hrisheekesa! let me have firm and secure devotion towards you. This is the prayer of every sincere devotee of the Lord. His mind dwells always on the Lord and he cannot bear separation from the Lord even for a moment.

Such a great devotee was Sri Poodattalwar known also as Bhoota Yogi. He is one of the trinity of Alwars noted for their eminence in the heirarchy of devotees of the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The other two are Sri Poighai Alwar (Saroyogi) and Sri Peyalwar (Mahayogi).

The three alwars were born in the same month of the same year of Siddharthi at three different places to preach godlove to people and set them well on the way to self-realisation. Poighai Alwar was born in the bright part of the month of Aswayuja on a Tuesday, the eighth day (Ashtami) under the star Sravana. He was found in a lotus flower in a tank in Conjeevaram. He was regarded as an Amsa of the Lord's Sankha or Conch called the Panchajanya. Immediately on the next day, Navami,

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under the star Dhanishta, Poodattalwar was found in a flower called Madhavee kusuma in Tirukkadalmallai. He is regarded as an Amsa of the Lord's gada or mace called the Kaumodaki. That is why in the invocation to him on the day aspected by his birthstar, he is prayed to as below:

*"Tulaadhanishtaa sambhootam Bhootam kallola-*
*maalinaha*
*Teerey phullotpaley Mallaapuryaamedey*
*Gadaamsajam!"*

Peyalwar was born in the same month of Aswayuja on the Dasami day under Satatara nakshatra in Mylapuram or or Mayoorapuram. He was found in a red lotus flower and went by the name of Mahayogi. He is regarded as the Amsa of Nandaka, the Lord's sword. The three alwars were thus not born of human womb. They were rare flowers who had offered their heartflower to the Lord and engaged themselves completely in preaching godlove to all. They led a detached life not enmeshing themselves in the tentacles of samsara. They went from place to place praising the Lord and redeeming people. They were thus pilots of the Bhakti movement and under their inspiring guidance people became filled with god consciousness and devotion. They were not aware of each other's existence. The Lord out of compassion to the dumb millions designed to make them meet each other, sing of him and redeem the afflicted and the ignorant, creating godlove in them.

On a certain night they met at the pial in front of the residence of a devotee in the town of Tirukkovaloor. They were in search of a place to sleep. First Sri Poodattalwar arrived at the place for shelter. A little later Sri Poighai Alwar came there for the same purpose and last came Sri Peyalwar. They made themselves

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known to each other and were very glad that the Lord brought them together. They engaged themselves in a divine discussion dwelling on the blissful qualities of the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. The Lord now wanted to test their patience and endurance. He made the place too short for giving them comfortable accomodation. The place appeared inadequate. They wondered at the strange phenomenon. They then tried to find the cause for it through their occult eye. The truth was found out. The Lord appeared before them with the goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi seated on the divine vehicle Sri Garutman. Their joy knew no bounds. They prostrated before him and went round him umpteen times praising him in highly devotional songs. The Lord was pleased with them and vanished blessing them. Their verses in praise of the Lord took the shape of Andadi prabandhams i.e. compositions in which every succeeding verse begins with the last word of the previous verse.

Sri Poighaialwar began his Andadi prabandham with the following pasuram:

*"Vaiyamdagaliyaa vaarkadaley neyyaaga*
*veyakadiron vilakkaaga - Seyya*
*sudaraagiyaanadikkey soottineney sonmaalai*
*idaraayi neemgavey yenru!"*

He says "I offer this sacred garland of verses containing pristine sayings after waving the light of Harati wherein the earth forms the vessel in which the ocean plays the part of ghee, the sungod being the invoked light."

Sri Poodattalwar began his Andadi prayer with the following pasuram:–

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*"Anbey tagaliyaa Aarvamey neyyaaga*
*inburugu sindai idu tiriyaa nanburigi*
*jnanacchudarvilakkeytrinen Naaranaarku*
*jnaanattamil purindanaan!"*

He petitions begining his prayer: "I have lighted the big light with my mind as the vessel, my devotion as ghee and the ways of the mind as the wick for it before the Lord Narayana".

Sri Peyalwar's Andadi prabandham begins with the pasuram:–

*"Tirukkandeyn Ponmeynikandeyn tigazhum*
*arukkanani niramumkandeyn, serukkilarum*
*ponnazhikandeyn puri sankan kai kandeyn*
*yennaazhi vannanpaalinru."*

He prays saying that he found the Lord with the divine mother Lakshmi in his breast, the goldenhued body shining like the sun and the lotuses of the chakras in the two hands, bright and glowing.

The three pasuras reveal the exalted state of devotion of the alwars. In their prabandhams they had pointed out the Vedic truths in fine Tamil and pleased the Lord. They went on carrying out their divine mission in life and finally attained godhead. Of these Sri Poodattalwar stressed on godconsciousness and contemplation of the Lord and his blissful attributes always, he being a shining example of the same. He is daily invoked by his disciples with the following prayer:–

*"Malaapuravaraadheesam Maadhaveekusumodbhavam*
*Bhootamnamaamiyo Vishnorjnaanadeepa makalpayat"*

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**He is saluted as the one who had spread the knowledge about Lord Sri Maha Vishnu and made the people have the necessary jnaana to attain Him.**

**His Andadi prabandham should be read by every one who desires the grace of the Lord.**

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# SATSANG

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of His disciples)*

Real Satsang is keeping company with the Lord through Yoga. The opposite of Satsang is Asatsang or worldy life. Association with Sages and Saints is positive Satsang. Whereas to study the books written by them is negative Satsang. Both types of Satsang are unfailing in their results, the positive bestows purity of heart and the negative bestows purity of mind. In short, Satsang is a safe boat to cross the Ocean of Samsara (cycle of birth and death).

*"Abdhou vidhou vadumukee phaninam nivase*
*Swarga Sudha vasati cheti budha vadanti*
*Kshara kashayah pathimritir vigham Indranasah*
*Kanthe sudha vasti sa bhagavat jananam*

There is nectar in the ocean, moon, heaven and the lips of a young woman. As the moon decays in a fortnight, it cannot contain genuine nectar. There is no real nectar in heaven, because the gods have to take births again in this world when fruits of their virtuous deeds are exhausted. There cannot be real nectar in the lips of a young woman, because the husband who tastes the nectar from her lips does not become immortal. The real nectar is in the tongues of holy Sages and Saints whose instructions (Upadesa) help their devotees to attain immortality and peace.

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How are Saints to be identified? Bhagavatha gives a description of Saints in six words: (1) Anapeksha (not caring for anything wordly) (2) Macchitta (heart and mind fixed in the Lord) (3) Samadarshina (equal vision) (4) Manta (no self-centred activity) (5) Nirahankara (no egotism) and (6) Aparigraha (non receiving of gifts for personal benefits.) But, Saints cannot be described since they are the embodiments of Truth. Truth is not marketable.

Holy men are rare to find in this world. The sandal-wood tree can hardly be found in every jungle. Pearls cannot be found in all seas. Precious stones cannot be found in all mountains. Real Swamigals cannot be found everywhere. One has to search for them.

Satsang is an important sentinal in the domain of moksha. If one keeps friendship with that sentinal, one will be automatically introduced to the friendship of vichar (inquiry), Santhi (peace) and Santosha (contentment) who are the other close friends of Satsang.

Devotion to the Lord does not come by itself. One blind man connot lead another. It is the company of the Mahatmas alone that can generate devotion in the heart of a man in Kali-Age.

The language of the heart and soul is the same every where. Devotees of the whole world have one creed and one language to express their feelings and experiences and that is the language of Love.

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## THE AVATARS OF THE LORD

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the prayer of his disciples)*

The Lord said to Arjuna:

*Imam Vivaswate yogam proktavaanahamavyayam*
*Vivaswaan Manavepraaha Manurikshvaakavebraveet.*

"I had vouchsafed this yoga of eternal significance to Vivaswata, the Sungod, who taught it to his son, Manu, who, in his turn, passed it on to his son, Ikshvaku".

Then Arjuna asked the Lord:

*Aparam Bhavatojanma param janma Vivaswataha*
*Kathametadvijaaneeyaam Tvamaadouproktavaaniti.*

"You are born only recently. How is it that you say that you had taught it to Surya, the Sun god, at the beginning of the Yuga?"

Thereupon the Lord made mention of his descents into the world, time and again, the avatars which brought peace and prosperity to all creation. He said that though he had no births and deaths he, of his own volition, took form in the world, time and again, when vice got the upper hand and the virtues suffered, leading to the regime of Adharma all over the universe. He came down to the world to punish the tyrants and establish Dharma.

Thus the purpose of Avataras is for disciplining the mortals – *Martyaavataarastviha Martyasikshanam.*

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Also, it is not possbile to describe the qualities and deeds of the Lord, who is the Absolute without form and attributes and about whom nothing is known. Unless the humans feel his personal form, touch and presence, they cannot contemplate on Him and praise Him. He, therefore, takes shape in the world, showers his grace on the creation and enables the devout to attain him by seeing, contemplating, hearing and singing of his glorious deeds: *Anugrahaaya Bhaktaanaam Maanusham Dehamaasritaha, Bhajate tatparobhavet.*

The Lord's manifestations on earth are for the purpose of bringing man nearer to his godhood and making him one with his divinity. The manifest Brahman takes the limited form of a human being to fulfil his spiritual purpose. Though God can control or extirpate evil by mere wish, his taking the human form is for making the human realise him through the experience of his glorious presence as one among his kin. The Lord even takes upon himself the form of even the lowest animal appropriately for the occasion demanding his incarnation.

For all the descents of the Lord into the world, the seed-avatara or *beejaavatara* is the Adinarayana avatara. All other avataras spring up from this manifestation of the Lord and merge into it soon after their work is finished in the world. The following avataras of the Lord have come into the world:

Varaha avatara (Boar shape), Narada avatara, Nara Narayana avatara, Kapila, Dattatreya, Yajna, Rishabha Pruthu, Matsya (Fish), Koorma, (Tortoise), Dhanvantari (the Divine Vaidya), Mohini, Narasimha (Man-Lion), Vamana (the Dwarf), Parasurama, Vedavyasa, Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Balarama, Buddha and the last to come, Kalki avatara.

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Some of these avataras are only fractional in power and some others are portions of such fractional energy of the Lord. Of these, the avataras of Matsya, Koorma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Buddha and Kalki are highlighted as, *Dasa Avataras* par excellence and meditated upon by the devout with ecstasy of worship.

The Lord said to Arjuna:

*Janmakarmacha medivyamevam yo vettitattvataha*
*Tyaktvaa deham punarjanmanaiti maametisorjuna.*

"Arjuna! The one who knows the truth touching my births on earth and my divine work, when he sheds the mortal coil, puts on its load no more and falls no more to earthly birth. He comes to me!"

Let us therefore contemplate on the avatars of the Lord and his glory.

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# SRI DANDIYADIGAL NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Samsara sarpadashtaanaam Jantoonaamavivekinaam*
*Chandrasekhara Paadaabja smaranam Paramowsha-*
*dham"*

For one affected by the bite of the serpent of samsara, be he a human, a beast or a stupid, the best and surest cure is the meditation of the lotus feet of Lord Chandrasekhara, the deity with the crescent moon in his head. This is exemplified amply in the lives of the Nayanars.

The life of Sri Dandiyadigal Nayanar is a typical example to the point. He was born blind. But he was not downhearted on that account. He believed in the grace of Lord Parama Siva whose holy name was always on his lips. He developed the occult eye or the Jnanachakshus. He prayed always to the Lord:–

*"Siva Sarvaga Sarva Sarmada Pranatho Deva dayaam*
*Kurushvamey*
*Nama Easwara naatha Dikpatey Punareyveysa*
*Namonamostutey""*

He offered salutations to Lord Siva, the omnipresent Lord, the Easwara or master of all, the Lord of the Directions and prayed for his grace again and again.

He lived in Tiruvaloor of Chola Country. The place was a strong hold of the Jains. They were dead against

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persons of Saivite persuasion. They poured earth into the tank before the Siva temple to render it useless to devotees. Sri Dandiyadigal felt deeply sorry. He pleaded with them not to do so but they would not budge. Sri Dandiyadigal thereupon got a stout pole established on the tank bund and another down in the tank. He tied a rope to them to guide his footsteps. He took out pails of earth and by using the rope came out and discharged them away from the tank. He tried thereby to undo the work of the Jains. These latter tried to prevent him from doing so in vain. They jeered at him and said that he might lose his life in the process. The Nayanar said: "I cannot stop this work. This is dear to my Lord".

The Jains mocked at him and said that he had no ears even to hear right things besides being blind. The Nayanar said that they were both deaf and blind and not he. Without looking at them further he worked on. They said that if it were true that he had eyes they vowed to leave the place for ever. The Nayanar prayed to the Lord for rescue from the Jains. That night the Lord appeared to him in his dream: He said: "Don't be afraid and miserable. I have given you eyes. You can see clearly hereafter. The Jains are all made blind. They won't trouble you hereafter".

The Nayanar was overcome with joy at the mercy of the Lord towards him. He sang the Lord's praise . He prayed:

*"Jaya Sankara Paarvateepatey Mruda Sambho*
*Sasikhandamandana*
*Madanaantaka Bhaktavatsala Priya Kailaasa*
*Dayaasudhaambhudey!"*

Victory to the Lord Sankara, the giver of all bliss and auspicious things, the husband of Goddess Parvati, Mruda,

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Sambhu, Chandrasekhara, the vanquisher of Madana, the god of love, the lover of devotees and Kailasa and the ocean of the ambrosia of kindness-sang he.

The same night the Lord appeared in the dream to the king of the place and instructed him to do the bidding of the Nayanar and stop the Jains from teasing him. The king came to Sri Dandiyadigal the next morning and waited on him. The Nayanar who could see now asked the king to order the Jains to come and see him. The blinded Jains somehow or other managed to come there. The king commanded them to leave the place for ever according to their vow. Some of the too fanatic Jains left the place dropping and drooping, stopping and stooping. The rest fell at the feet of the Nayanar and craved his pardon. The Nayanar forgave them and prayed to the Lord. They recovered their lost eyesight and became Saivites. They became the followers of the Nayanar whose greatness was recognised by all. He was praised by everyone. Saivism spread due to his teachings and personal example. He spent the rest of of his life always meditating on Lord Siva, the sure redeemer of his devotees. In the end he reached the abode of Sankara showing to the world how redoubtable the Lord's name is for all time to come to those caught in the tentacles of the serpent of Samsara.

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## SRI MOORTHI NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Bheshajam bhavaroginaamakhilaapadaamapa-*
*haarinam*
*Dakshayajnavinaasanam Trigunaatmakam Trivilo-*
*chanam*
*Bhuktimuktidaayakam Nikhilaaghasamghanibarhanam*
*Chandrasekharamaasraya Mama kimkarishyati vai*
*Yamaha!"*

I seek the shelter of Lord Chandrasekhara, who is the divine curer of this disease of births and deaths, who wards off all dangers to humanity, who is the destroyer of the sacrifice of Daksha and the repository of the three Gunas (Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas) and who is the three-eyed deity, the bestower of physical well being and salvation with bliss and the wiperout of the totality of sins. What can Yama do to me? That is how the ardent devotee of the Lord feels. The Lord is the sole refuge of his devotees. He goes to the succour of the sterling devotee at the appropriate time and gives him redemption. But the way to merit that mercy is the way of total surrender to him without fear of anything. In Madurai of the Pandyan country there lived a pious merchant called Moorthi Nayanar. He was a great devotee of Lord Siva. Every day he used to offer sandalwood to Lord Sundareswarar and worship him. In course of time a Jain king came into power. Under his aegis many Jain priests settled in Madurai and having royal patronage they

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converted a good lot of people to Jainism. Many devotees of the Lord left the place unable to bear their persecution.

But Moorthi Nayanar would not budge. He continued his sandalwood kainkarya to the Lord as usual. The matter was brought to the notice of the king. He directed that no one should sell sandalwood to the Nayanar. The latter wandered in vain to get sandalwood. None would give it to him. He went to the Lord's presence in the temple. He poured out his agony of heart before the Lord. Then suddenly an idea struck him. Why not scrub his arms on the ground even as he did the sandalwood stick on its base; No sooner thought than done. The whole ground became full of blood. Bones protruded. He would not stop. The Lord was immensely pleased with his devotion. He appeared in full splendour before the Nayanar. He said that the oppressor king would die and the Nayanar himself would become the king in his place. The Nayanar found himself whole and perfect in body as he prostrated before the Lord. He praised the Lord:

*"Devadevam Yamaaraadhya Mrikandutanayomunihi*
*Nityatwamagamatsadyastam Vande Somasundaram!*
*Nijanetraambujakrutam Poojayaaparitoshyayam*
*Sreepatirlabhatechakram tam Vande Somasundaram!*
*Yasyapranaama maatrena samti sarvaascha sampadaha*
*Sarvasiddhipradam Sambhum tam Vande Somasundaram!*
*Yasya darsanamaatrena Brahmahatyaadi paatakam*
*Avasyam nasyati kshipram tam Vande Somsundaram!*
*Uttamaangamcha charanam Brahmanaa Vishnunaa picha*
*Nadrusyate yasya yatnastam Vande Somasundaram!"*

"I salute the Lord of Lords, Somasundaram, who made Markandeya eternal and who, pleased with the worship by



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the eyelotuses of Lord Vishnu, vouchsafed to him the Discus, Sudarsana. By merely saluting you, all riches accrue to a person and all the wished for desires are fulfilled. By a vision of you itself all terrible sins like the murder of brahmins are destroyed. Lord Brahma could not find your head and Lord Vishnu could not discover your feet however much they tried to do so. I salute you Lord Somasundara of such a glory!" He came out of the temple. In the mean time the Jain king died. He had no children. So it was decided that he, whom the royal elephant would garland, should be made king. Accordingly the royal elephant was blindfolded and left off. It walked straight in grand strides to the Nayanar, garlanded him and took him to the palace. The ministers got ready to perform his coronation. But he said that all of them should give up Jainism and become devotees of Lord Siva before he could be crowned. They did so. Within a short time Madurai regained its pristine position as the shining abode of Lord Somasundara with Sri Moorthi Nayanar as the chief votary of the Lord. He worked for the spread of the Lord's kingdom on earth and attained salvation. Unalloyed worship of the Lord is sure to bring in its wake all bliss to the devotee and bestow the spiritual strength necessary to attain him ultimately.

Om Namasivaya!

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# KANNAPPA NAYANAR

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*)

God's mercy is illimitable and indescribable. His compassion for His devotees defies description. Pure, innocent illiterate worship also wins His grace. One need not be a Vedantin or scholar to attain Him. The uncouth ignorant lout also will and can earn His grace and realise Him. Caste and creed, prosperity or poverty, learning or illiteracy of the seeker do not matter. Deep unalloyed devotion to Him with absolute surrender alone is sufficient to get redemption.

Kannappa Nayanar was not of a high caste. He was a Sabara, a dweller of the forest. Yet he became one of the greatest of the Nayanars and attained immortality. His original name was Thinnan. He was the only son of the chieftain of a forest tribe that lived near the Sri Kalahasti Kshetra. He was born to the chief after many years of married life and was the apple of his eye. He was pretty and strong and the time had come to initiate him to hunting as he had become proficient in archery, sword play and all feats of arms. It was customary for the novitiate to offer the first killing to tribal deity to the accompaniment of great pomp, gaiety and festivities and revelries. Accordingly Thinna, followed by his fellows, hunted a wild boar and offered it to the tribal deity. All ate, drank and sang to the accompaniment of wild dances. They rested awhile before embarking on further hunting.

Thinna also took rest under the deep shade of a huge banyan tree and dozed off. He had then a wonderful dream. He found before him the Lord Kailas, Parameswara, in all His glory with trident in hand. The Lord said, "Thinna! The time has come for the perfection of your soul. This place is of equal efficacy with the Mountain of Kailas. You will find a hill nearby. I am there. Come on, You shall attain Me." Thinna was suddenly disturbed at the time and he woke up with a start to find his tribesmen, bestirring themselves to resume hunting. He also followed. Then he found a wild pig which he chased. It led him on and on away from his followers and disappeared near a clearing. Thinna searched for it high and low. Then all at once he found to his intense joy a brilliant Siva Linga before him. He remembered his dream and fell prostrate before it. He thought it to be the Lord Himself. He could not bear to see the Lord in that forlorn condition. He said, "O Lord! How can You be here all alone? Who will give You food? Who will quench your thirst? I cannot leave You uncared for in this desolated place. Please come over to our village. You will be well looked after. You will have sweet delicious meat well cooked and properly dressed. Why remain in this dreadful forest?"

The Lord did not respond. Then he entreated again and again for an answer to his request. Finding his efforts at getting a reply futile, he made up his mind to remain there and look after Him. He would not stir from the place. He was lost in deep contemplation of the Lord. His followers came in search of him. They could not shake him from his resolve to stay there and serve the Lord for all time. His parents came there and tried their level best to take him back with them in vain. They left the place leaving him to his fate. Thinna felt that the Lord

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was hungry. So he left the place, hunted a pig, roasted it well, took the best part of meat from it, put the holy water of the Suvarnamukhi river in his mouth wherewith to wash the Lord and came back to Him. He spit the water on the Lord, worshipped with flowers, placed the meat before Him and prayed to Him to take the meat. When he found that the Lord would not partake of it, he became adamant and said that he would not himself take any food or water till the Lord took the offering made by him.

The Allmerciful Lord Kalahasteeswara was immensely pleased with the purity and intensity of his devotion partook of the meat to his great joy. Every day he stood sentry by the Lord, meditated on Him, got food by hunting in the forest, and continued to serve Him with steadfast devotion with no thought of home entering his mind.

Before the arrival of Thinna on the scene, a holy brahmin devotee used to come to the place from a nearby village and worship the Linga with Vedic rituals. After his worship he used to go back and come again the next day. After the advent of Thinna, he found every day to his chargrin the holy linga and the place defiled by pieces of meat. He removed them, cleaned the place and after his worship left the place. When he found that the defiling of the place continued unabated, he sat before the Linga in great anguish and prayed to the Lord to tell him as to which evil rascal was at the root of that daily sacrilege. Otherwise he would sacrifice himself before Him. Then the Lord's voice was heard. "O learned brahmin! this is the worship of an ignorant and innocent devotee par excellence. He is a Sabara. The flowers that you have offered are removed by him by his shoes and he cleans Me by water brought in his mouth from the holy river. Though he does so and gives me meat, I relish his offering for it is sterling

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and crystal pure. He is a perfect devotee. You can see it for yourself."

The brahmin hid himself behind a tree and waited to see the woodman devotee. After some time Thinna came there as usual with meat in one hand, flowers in the other and the holy water in the mouth. Suddenly he found blood oozing from out of one eye of the Linga. He felt deep misery on seeing it. He tried every known method to stop the flow of blood. He applied herbs to no purpose. Then he thought that if he were to substitute his eye for that of the Lord, the blood would be arrested. No sooner thought than done. Immediately he pulled out one of his eyes and placed it on the eye of the Lord. Blood stopped oozing at once. Thinna was over joyed. But his joy was short lived as the other eye of the Lord began to send out blood. He was not however dismayed. "I know the remedy now, my Lord! Dont' be afraid" he said.

Keeping his leg on the damaged eye of the Lord to show him the place, he took out his arrow to pull out his second eye and place it on the damaged eye of the Lord. At once the Lord Sri Kalahasteeswara emerged from out of the Linga in full effulgence and blessed him. The Lord said, "O Kannappa! I am pleased with your deep devotion. Stop. I have never seen a Bhaktha of such unsullied bhakthi. You have earned for yourself My complete grace. Your mind is purer than the minds of the sages who have performed austerities and conducted sacrifices. You are of Me". Thinna got back his eyes. He was very much in ecstasy of mind. The brahmin devotee who had witnessed the epic scene revealed himself now to Thinna, called him Kannappa, the name given by the Lord Himself to him and worshipped him. To this day Kannappa

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Nayanar, the donor of eyes to the Lord Sri Kalahasteeswara is venerated. His idol is found established in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple of Sri Kalahasteeswara and worship is offered to him. There is a hill by his name where he attained siddhi before the Lord. It is evident from the forgoing saga of life of Kannappa Nayanar that one who loves the Lord with total surrender to Him is sure to realise Him however low in caste or position, and however ignorant he might be. All are equal in the eyes of the Lord and are eligible to obtain His grace. The only thing is his devotion should be wholehearted, deep and total.

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# NAVARATRI

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*)

*"Geerdevateti Garudadhwajasundareeti*
*Saakambareeti Sasisekharavallabheti*
*Srushtisthiti pralayakelishu Samasthitaaya*
*Tasyainamastribhuvanaika Gurotarunyai."*

I Salute the Universal Mother, the spouse of the preceptor of the three worlds, who shines as the goddess of speech and word at the time of creation, who takes the form of Mahalakshmi, the wife of Lord Vishnu who has Garuda on his flagstaff at the time of preservation and who becomes Goddess Sakambari, the wife of Lord Chandrasekhara at the time of dissolution. She is Trikala Narayani. Her creator aspect merged in Lord Brahma. Her preservation aspect Narayani shone resplendently in Mandara Hill as a damsel of pristine and peerless beauty. Her destroyer form made short work of a ferocious demon called Ruru. She separated his skin from his munda or head and got the name "Chamundi". As Narayani held court in Mandara Hill, the sage Narada came to her and paid his respects to her. He prayed to her:

*"Sarvamangala Maangalye Sive Sarvaarthasaadhake*
*Saranye Tryambake Devi Naaraayani Namostute".*

"O Narayani ! I make my obeisance to you, the creator of all auspiciousness, the fulfiller of all desires and the consort of the three-eyed Lord Siva. I surrender to you."

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Narayani looked on him tenderly and asked him as to what ailed him. The sage told her about the cruel giant Mahishasura who harassed the Devas, the sages and the virtuous. The giant was the off–spring of Diti who gave birth to him after getting a boon from Lord Brahma to beget the vanquisher of Indra and the Devas. He was born with the face of buffalo. He performed severe penance meditating on Lord Siva. The Lord was pleased with his austerities and manifested himself before him. He wanted the giant to name his desire. Mahishasura prayed for immortality. Lord Siva told that the boon was impossible as one who was born ought to die. Then Mahisha requested that only a woman should bring about his death. He got the boon and became fiery in his treatment of the Devas, the sages and the innocent. The Devas could not bear the toture meted out to them. The sage Narada represented their despicable plight of misery to the Goddess Narayani and prayed for her grace. Narayani smiled on him and expressed her readiness to wipe out the giant.

Narada was pleased with the success of his mission and went to the giant Mahisha. He praised the giant and told him that there was the most beautiful lady of the three worlds resident in the Mandara Hill and he was the fittest person to marry her. Mahisha was charmed with he account given by Narada and he ordered his warriors to bring her. His minister, Praghana, told him that he should not embark on that venture. She was the divine consort of Lord Siva. But Mahisha would not stop. His men were routed by the Devi. So Mahisha went to battle with her.

The terrible fight went on for nine days and Narayani killed him on the tenth day.

These nine days are the Navaratri days and the tenth day is the Vijayadasami day celebrated as the day of victory

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of the Devi who became Mahishasuramardini. This grand event is celebrated as the Dasara festival or Navaratri festival nowadays. These days are important for Devi-worship. They occur in the month of Aswayuja during the Sarat season.

The Devi is worshipped in her three way manifestation of Trikala Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, the Iccha sakti, Kriyasakti and Jnana sakti, during these days. We have accordingly the Saraswatipooja on Saptami, Durga pooja on Durgashtami and the Mahalakshmi pooja on the Mahar-navami (nineth day). The Devi's sport with the mighty Asura is also symbolised by artistically parading the dolls representing all forms of creation in an attitude of prayer to the Devi for her grace to secure their well-being.

The Divine Mother is also worshipped by being visualised in girl-children from the ages of 2 to 10 one on each day who are regarded as the Devi herself, and offered worship with intense devotion. The Divine mother will be pleased when worship is made to her in this manner. She will protect all the devotees who offer their prayers to her during these days.

The Sarat season is marked by the prevalence of virulent diseases and ill health. The Mother's worship in the period wards off all the diseases. One who recites the Devi Bhagavata and other works that highlight the glory of the Devi will be freed from all ills physical or mental. Her worship roots out all enemies, internal and external. The Navaratri vrata was performed by Lord Rama in Kishkindha on the advice of the sage Narada to obtain the Divine Mother's grace to get back Mother Seeta. So also did Lord Siva pray to her at the time of his fierce battle with the giant Tripurasura. Without the Devi's animation the Trinity of gods cannot function effectively.

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That being so let us offer worship to her praying for her grace time in and time out.

*Jaatavedase suna vaama soma maraatee yato nidahaati Vedaha Sanah parshadati Durgaani Viswaa naaveva sindhumduritaatyagnihi Taamagnivarnaam tapasaa-jwalamteem Vairochaheem karmaphaleshujushtaam Durgaam Deveem saranamanam prapadye sutarasi tarase Namaha!*

My salutations are to the Devi who is the Paramatman in swabhava, the life spirit, the incarnation of bliss. I seek refuge in Thee, O, Goddess Durga of fiery complexion, beheld by Brahma, the burner of all our foes, the fulfiller of the desires of all your devotees and the guide to ferry over this ocean of samsara.

Om Tatsat!

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# MURUGAN'S DIVINE CONSORTS

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Devaadidevanuta Devaganaadhinaatha,*
*Devendravandya Mrudupankaja manjupaada,*
*Devarshi Naaradamuneendra sugeetakeerta,*
*Valleesanaatha Mamadehi karaavalambam!*

I pray for the guidance by hand of the Lord of Sri Valli, Murugan, who was saluted and praised by the Lord of Lords, the Devas, Devendra and the Divine Sage Narada, who sang and spread his glory in all the worlds. He is the Lord commanding the Devas. He vanquished the evil demon Taraka whose misdeeds occasioned his manifestation. Then the giant Soorapadman came to attack him. Lord Skanda annihilated him within no time. Devendra was pleased with his valour and gave his foster daughter Devasenai in marriage to him.

Mother Devasenai, was the born daughter of Arishtanemi, a Prajapati. She was being carried away by a giant called Kesi when she was very young. Hearing her cries of distress, Devendra went to her rescue. He killed the giant and brought her up himself as his own child. When asked as to what she wanted from him as a gift, she said that she desired to have the most eligible, beautiful and powerful godly hero as her husband. Indra went to the Creator Brahma to find out who it would be. The Creater told him that the mightiest commander of the divine forces would be

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her husband. With the advent of Skanda, the choice fell on him and she became his Divine Consort. Prayer to her in conjunction with Lord Skanda would make one powerful and invincible in his fight against evil and protect him giving him all health, wealth and prosperity.

Some time after this happy consummation, Lord Skanda came to Mount Kailas to perform service to his parents, Lord Parameswara and Mother Parvati. One day Narada came to see him and pay his respects. He told that in Bhilpuram in Bhooloka ruled by the Bhil-king Pulinda a golden jewel was born for him. She was the foster daughter of Pulinda. She was named Sri Valli. Her beauty and character were matchless in the whole Universe and she was the fittest to be his Divine Consort. After saying these words to Murugan, the sage went to Pulinda and told him that the only person fit to be Sri Valli's husband was the Lord Murugan, son of the mighty Lord Parameswara. He would be coming that way, fall in love with Sri Valli and marry her. What better fortune could he have than this-an alliance with the Lord of Lords! Pulinda felt overjoyed and eagerly waited for the happy event to materialise. In the meantime Lord Murugan was very anxious to have a look at the handsome Sri Valli and so he came down to the vicinity of Bhilpura with his retinue. Sri Valli was also disturbed in mind ever since she heard about Lord Murugan's beauty, valour and fame,. She was very much agitated in mind as to whether that mighty Lord would deign to marry a lowborn person like her. She prayed to him for his Divine Hand and pined for him. As was her wont, she went with her companions to her flower garden the day Murugan descended to see her for himself. The Lord entered the garden. The companion maids objected to his presence there. When he revealed his identity,

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they were joyful and wondered at the turn of events. They told Sri Valli about his presence and brought her there. Lord Murugan took her hand and asked her to come away with him. She said that it was not proper for her to follow him without being married to him by her parents whose permission he should seek. Just then bugles were sounded indicating the arrival of her father there. Murugan transformed himself into a tree. Pulinda came there. He took his daughter with him without noting anything peculiar. Learning about the affair at home from Sri Valli, Pulinda came to Murugan with his full court, offered obeisance to him and told him that he could marry Sri Valli. There was an auspicious Muhurta early next morning. He made necessary arrangements. Lord Parameswara and Goddess Parvathi arrived in full splendour with all other Divinities and the marriage was performed with great pomp and bliss. Sri Valli received the blessings of all and went with her husband to his abode. There she was asked to salute and receive the blessings of Mother Devasenai praying for her permission to live with the Lord as her co-consort. Sri Valli did so with great pleasure. Murugan was immensely pleased with her conduct. When one prays to Murugan, one should think of him as in union with Sri Valli and Devasenai. One who surrenders to the Lord of Sri Valli would obtain spiritual progress and salvation to whatever caste, creed, race or status he might belong. His divine grace would be showered equally on every one, high and low, rich and poor. The only thing that matters is the intensity of dedicated love towards him with total surrender. Hence let us pray:

*Haaraadi ratnamaniyakta kireeta haarakundala*
*lasatkavachaabhirama*
*Hei Veera Taaraka jayaasurabrundavandya,*
*Valleesanaatha Mamadehi Karaavalambam!*

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O Lord of Sri Valli! beautiful and charming with the necklace of gems, crown, earings, bright armour and other regalia, annihilator of the Demon Taraka, praised and venerated by the gods, give me your precious guidance by hand.

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# TEMPLE, THE ABODE OF GOD

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*)

The temple is the abode of God. It is the spiritual reservoir. Everywhere in the world today we find nothing but strife and discontent. People are talking atheism. Temples and holy men have the most important part to play in redeeming the present day world from this sorry state. There are people who say: "If God is everywhere and in every thing, why should we go to a temple? Why could not we be where we are and think of him?" Well and good. But can you do so? Can you perceive the Lord everywhere and in everything? It is not possible for you to do so unless you attain a state of spirituality which bestows Brahmajnana on you with the capacity to look upon all as the living manifestations of the Lord.

**The Lord has said:**

*Iswarassarvbhootaanaam hruddwserjuna tishttati*
*Bhraamayan Sarva bhootaani yantraaroodhaani*
*maayayaa!*

The Lord is seated in the hearts of every living being; but all creatures wander hither and thither in pursuit of the Lord being deluded by illusion just like figures on a machine revolving round and round. So it is necessary to have some centres where one can concentrate on godhead receive spiritual solace and strength. Temples or places of worship are intended to generate love for the Lord and

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infuse spiritual comfort. The idols installed in the temples are not mere stones. The worshippers look upon them as the living manifestations of the Supreme. When a worshipper stands before the idol, he feels the divine presence of the deity symbolised by the idol. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa saw the Divine Mother in the idol of Kali before him. He conversed with her. Not only that. He made his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, also see the Mother, speak to her and ask for gifts. Hence the devout have to think that the idol is the deity itself and that will lead him on to perceive the Supreme Being. The power signified by the aspect of the Lord indicated by the idol in the sanctum sanctorum permeates the devotee and he is spiritually elevated and feels divine presence and bliss.

Temples are the store house of spiritual energy and they have to be holy. All mundane talk must be avoided. We are all familiar with the word "Gossip". It originally meant "Talk in God's places", but now it has the meaning "light idle talk" for the templegoers indulged in worldly, material and unworthy talk in the precincts of the temples. This must be eschewed. Temples must be places for Satsang, Bhajan, Sankeertan and the like-holy discourses. From the time one enters the temple till he leaves it, one must be of the mind of the Lord and take in the Lord's grandeur and presence with single-minded devotion. To enable the worshippers to feel the solemn grandeur of the Lord, provision is made in the temples to hold their attention. Bells are rung while doing worship to keep out external sounds and to divert the mind inward and concentrated on godhead. Lights are shown and waved before the idol to denote that the Lord is the Spiritual Light burning away the darkness of Ajnana and drawing the worshipper to bright life. Dhoopam, that is, Agarbathi or scented

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sticks, are lighted to create a sweet aroma and make the environment pleasing and refreshing to the mind. It has also a physical effect and acts as a disinfectant. Food or edibles are offered to the deity and given as prasad. Being the offering partaken of by the Lord, it has an elixir-like effect on the receiver and he feels blessed. The burning of camphor and performance of harati is indicative of the total surrender and annihilation of the Ego and the merger of the individual soul in the Cosmic soul. Apart from the edible prasad, Vibhuti or the sacred ash is given in Saivite temples. It is to be applied on the forehead. It brings to the mind of the worshipper the equality of all in the eyes of the Lord irrespective of caste, creed or colour and all are reduced to the ashes equally. Vibhuti can also be taken in. Kumkum is given in temples of Sakti worship where feminine forms of the Supreme are installed. It is to be put in the space between the eyebrows. It shows that all are one to the Divine Mother and the same blood runs in all. Thulasi is given as prasad in Vaishnavite temples. It can be taken in. It has medicinal effect also. All these types of prasad are highly powerful as they are used in the worship of the Lord. They are charged with spiritual power generated by the mantras uttered during worship. All these facts must be borne in mind by the temple-goers and they must preserve the sanctity of the temples to feel and attain Divine Grace.

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## SATYAMEVAJAYATE NANRUTAM

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Deham praanamapeendriyaanyapi chalaam*
*buddhimcha soonyam viduhu*
*Streebaalaandhajadopamaastvaha miti*
*bhraantaa bhrusam vaadinahal*
*Maayaasakti vilaasa kalpita mahaavyaamohasamharine*

*Tasmai Sree Gurumoortaye Namaidam Dakshinamoortaye I*

Salutations are offered to Lord Parameswara, Dakshinamoorti, shedding spiritual enlightenment on the aspirant to realise him, the Supreme Brahman. facing South with the graceful chinmudra pose to enable all to escape from the difficulties and sufferings at the hands of Yama, the Lord of South. Salutation to all of you, bhagavatswaroopins. The Lord is in all - only we do not come to realise this cardinal fact due to Avidya or ignorance.

Men think of Him in devious ways being deluded by the power of illusion of the Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent Lord. Due to the sport of his powerful illusion, men are not in a position to know his real nature. He is the Supreme Atman. Some think of this body itself to be the Atman. There are others who think it to be the vital air or Prana. Still others say that it is the sumtotal of the indriyas or the senses. There are again others who say that it is the intellect that is the Atman. Besides them there are others who state the Atman is soonya or nothingness. These are comparable to the illiterate women,

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children, the blind and the weak of intellect. They grope in the dark. They do not have real Atmajnana. Why should these people think of the Atman in this manner? Why should some of them go even to the extreme and say that there is no God or Brahman at all? Why should they deny the existence of the Lord who is formless and with form, who has no attributes but who still assumes attribute to facilitate their spiritual evolution by the gradual process of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana? It is because the Lord covers them with Avidya and puts them on the mettle.

Unless one strives for the grace and mercy of the Lord, he cannot get rid of this vyamoha or illusion or pet phobia which is the offshoot of the sport of the mayasakti of the Lord. It is not easy to have a glimpse of the Supreme.

As Lord Yama says to Nachiketas:

*Avidyaayaa mantare vartamaanaaha swayam dheeraaha*
*panditam manyamaanaaha*
*Dandrasyamaanaaha pariyanti moodhaa andheneva*
*neeyamaanaa yathaandhaaha!*

The ignorant living in the midst of darkness fancy themselves to be enlightened and wise. They go round and round in circles being deluded in crooked paths after the manner of the blind led by the blind.

*Na saam paraayaha pratibbhaatibaalam*
*pramaadyantam vittamohena moodham*
*Ayamloko naasti para iti maani Punarvasamaapadyate*
*me!*

The path to the hereafter or the para is not comprehended by the ignorant man. It is not apparent to him.

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He is foolish being led by the power of illusion of wealth. He thinks, "This alone is the world-nothing else. To him there is no otherworld. Thus he comes again and again under my sway"– says Yama further. The ego of man is so great that he becomes a prey to the Arishadvargas-kama krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya-desire, anger greed, binding attachment, arrogance and envy. He requires a great teacher who has realised the Brahman to lift him up from this abyss of ignorance.

*"Na narenaa varenaa prokta esha suvigneyo*
*behudhaa chintyamaanam*
*Ananya prokte gatiratra naastyaneeyaanhyatarkya*
*manu pramaanaath".*

The Self or Brahman when taught by a man of inferior intellect is not easily known. It is difficult to comprehend. It is thought of in various ways. But when taught by a preceptor who is one with the Brahman or who knows and feels his identity with the Brahman, the aspirant cannot have any doubt about it. It is definitely and clearly grasped then. The Self being subtler than the subtle cannot be obtained by arguing about. It should be noted that the Self is beyond words, beyond feeling, beyond argument, beyond hearing and beyond everything.

*"Sravanaayaaha bahubhiryonalabhyaha Srunvantopi*
*bahavo yam navidyuhu*
*Aascharyo vaktaa kusalosya labdhaascharyo*
*Gnaataa kusalaanusishtaha"*

Many are not able to hear the self and its prabodha or message. Even when they hear they do not comprehend. That person is wonderful, when found, who is able to teach the Self. Wonderful is he who knows the Self when taught by an able acharya or teacher.

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That being so, the Lord has vouchsafed to the world, and is still doing so, a long procession of holy men and women, prophets and prophetesses, to make the ignorant wise and realise him properly. He has sent in Karmaveeras or the devoted to duty, the Bhaktasooras or the spirited devotees and the Jnanadhouryas or the firm bearers of Jnana or divine knowledge to suit the different rungs of the ladder of attainment.

We have the lives of great yogins, patriots, saints and devotees before us. But we are prone to think of their lives as mere concoctions of the theists who want to trade on god and godhead. Do you want any other instance to prove the intensity of illusion?

Hence I say as the Upanishad says:

*"Uttishtthata jaagrata praapyavararaan nibodhata,*
*kshurasya*
*dhaaraa nisitaa duratyayaa durga pathastat*
*Kavayovadanti l".*

Arise, awake and having reached the great preceptor, learn. Learn about the Lord: the one with attributes and without the attributes, the Brahman, the Self. As the wise affirm the path of learning about the Brahman is like walking on that sharp edge of the razor. The preceptor will put you on the path and lead you on. The preceptor of preceptors, Lord Murugan, will lead you all in that direction by his infinite grace.

Dont' lay store by caste. It is a manmade institution. There is only one caste-man-in the world. The Lord is attainable by all. Murugan will bless you. Have abundant and intense faith in his mercy.

He is the *Vel Alwinar* – Governor of the Vel. The Vel pierces the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of evil, the

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toughness of the Arishadvargas, the invincibility of the vagaries of the mind. It works and works to that end. You are Velavan's chosen people. You are not vellalars-a caste to be looked down upon or frowned at. You are *Vel Alars*-the users of the Vel, the spear that probes into the soil and brings out plenty and prosperity in its wake. You are reared up by the *Vel Alwinar,* Lord Dandayudapaani, Murugan. He is looking after you all.

You are given talents. They may differ from one person to another, But put in your effort relying on the grace of the Vel Alwinar – Saravanabhava Murugan. You shall succeed more quickly than you can ever imagine. Note: *"Krishito naasti durbhiksham"* – Effort never fails to produce prosperity. The prosperity will be both material and spiritual.

This is the Truth. It shall win.

*"Satyameva jayate naanrutam, satyena panthaa*
*vitato Devayaanaha*
*Enaakramantyasha yohyaapta kaamaa yatra*
*tatsatyasya paramam nidhaanam!"*

Truth alone gets victory-not Untruth. By Truth is opened the path of the gods by which the sages gratified in their desires proceed to where there is that highest place of the True One.

This is my peroration to you.

*Subham bhooyat*-blessedness will obtain. May Dandapani Murugan bless us all in the holy task of attaining his lotus feet!

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# SANKRANTI

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Dhyaayet Sooryamanantakotikiranam tejomayam Bhaaskaram*
*Bhaktaanaamabhayapradam dinakaram jyotirmayam Samkaram*
*Aadityam Jagadeesamachyutamajam Trailokyachhoo-daamanim*
*Bhaktaabheeshtavarapradam Dinamanim Martand-amaadyam Subham"*

I meditate on Lord Surya of infinitecrored rays of brilliance, permeated with effulgence. I concentrate on Bhaskara who gives protection and shelter to his votaries, who makes the way for all, full of resplendent light, giving all auspicious and blessed things. I contemplate on Aditya, the Lord of the Universe, Achyuta not subject to decay, the birthless and bright gem of the three worlds, fulfilling the desires of his devotees granting all boons asked for by them. I salute him of severe scorching rays, the beginning of all the blessed one.

The festival of Sankranti is connected with movement of Lord Surya Narayana, in relation to the Universe. He is Kalatma, the time Spirit, Sarvabhootatma, resident in all beings and Vedatma, the soul of the Vedas. He wards off all evils and diseases and keeps his worshippers in a state of perpetual physical and mental health. His movement in the Rasis of the sky has definite effect upon all the

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world as the world exists and is sustained and protected by him. The entry of the sun into the houses of the zodiac is called "Samkramana". Of all the Sankramanas or such entries, the entry of his into the sign of Makara is the most auspicious. It is called Makara-sankranti or merely Sankranti for short. For from that moment the day time begins for the gods. They shine in their full vigour and go about making their presence felt. That is why on these occasions all the deities are taken out of the temples in procession on all the mounts or vahanas in the temples one after another. The previous month of Dhanurmas ushers in this daytime for the Devas and so has highlighted significance.

The time of Sankranti is very auspicious and blessed. It is called Uttarayana punyakala. The sun travels north of equator from this time. We will receive the full blast of his beneficial presence. Those who leave the mortal coil now go to the heavenly abode of the gods through Devayana with no prospect of rebirth. That was why Bheeshmacharya waited till this blessed moment to leave the world having been gifted with the power to die at will by his father Santanu who was pleased with his filial love that prompted him to become a bachelor for life. The Uttarayana begins with Makara Sankranti.

When the sun enters the Kataka sign, it is Kataka Sankranti or Dakshinayana punyakala. Though it is also auspicious, Makara Sankranti with Pongal following on the next day has a great auspiciousness and beneficial effect. Lord Surya is worshipped as he has directed his movement towards us welcoming us all into his fold removing the bitterness of the cold season and bestowing plentily on us the energy required for our vigorous well being. Oblations are also offered to the Devas whose day has just

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begun. In this world beset by diseases, births, old age and death worship of Lord Surya is a must and that is of the greatest efficacy on Sankranti day.

The day previous to it named Bhogi is celebrated to mark the end of all darkness and affliction that have beset us so far. It is the beginning of Bhoga or enjoyment for us. The old and soiled clothes and articles are made into a bonfire and burnt to signify the wiping out of all the evil memories of the past and beginning of a period of joy and peace. It is also a remembrancer of the total destruction of Ravana, who was evil personified. The day after Sankranti is celebrated as pongal festival with offerings of the first products of harvest as pongal to Lord Suryanarayana who is the vital animator of the Universe, and whose grace is needed for production of articles, food for the sustenance of the world. The cows are worshipped on the next day beautifully decorated and paraded all over. It is Mattu pongal day. They give milk, the elixir of the world and their products are variously useful. Agni, the firegod, once wanted to be away and he was in hiding from the gods. The cows gave him shelter and became holy on that account. They became kapila in colour, as a result of contact with the firegod. They became divinely aspected. All the divinities wanted a place in them and were so given. But when Goddess Lakshmi sought a niche in them they refused saying that she was fickle and would not stick to a place. But on her persistant request they asked her to aspect their excreta. That was how Gomaya and Gomootra became blessed. They are disinfectant and useful in umpteen ways. Thus the three days of Bhogi, Sankranti and Pongal are of the greatest spiritual and material significance. There is one other fact noteworthy about Sankranti. The presiding deity of Sankranti or Sankrantipurusha as

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he is called portends certain things by his appearance, apparel, mount and direction of movement. The direction in which he moves shows destruction and disaster to the places in that direction. The things he wears, the category of animals denoted by his mount are subject to decay that year. By offering gifts to the Brahmins and to the poor at the time of Birth of the Sankrantipurusha, one can mitigate the evil and get beneficial results. Hence it is that Sankranti has to be preserved as a holy day of prayer and worship of Lord Suryanarayana the soul force of the Universe for all time to come.

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## TIRUPPANI ALWAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Lakshmeenivaase Jagataamnivase Hrutpadmavaase*
*Ravibimbavaase*
*Seshaadrivaase khilalokavaase Sreerangavaase*
*Namataamnamaami!"*

I salute the Lord of Sreerangam who is omnipresent. He forms the residence of Goddess Lakshmi and pervades the whole universe. He makes his abode in the heart-lotuses of the devout. He is in Seshadri or Tirumala-Tirupati hill and in the Sun.

The Lord who is in the reclining posture in Sreerangam is the all merciful Lord who is the redeemer of all irrespective of caste, creed, race or rank. One of his foremost devotees was Tiruppani Alwar who was a Panchama by caste. He won great name and fame for himself by his unique and spotless devotion to the Lord. He is himself worshipped by the devotees of Sreeranga Natha with the following prayer on the day with his birth day asterism.

*"Vruschike Rohineejaatam Sreepaanim nichulaapure*
*Sreevatsaamsam Gaayakendram Munivaahana-*
*maasraye!"*

The worshiper seeks the shelter of Tiruppani alwar born under the star Rohini in the Vruschika Laghna in Choolappur or Turaiyur near Srirangam. He was born of

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the amsa of the breast-sign Sreevatsa of the Lord and was a great singer saint. He was the one carried by a sage to the presence of the Lord under the instruction of the Lord himself. Though bred up in the Panchama caste he had obtained such a merit as to be the closest to the Lord by dint of his supreme devotion to Lord Sreeranganaatha.

He was found in a paddy field on the full moon day in the month of Kartik in the year Durmati as if to wipe out the evil in the minds of people. The finder was a pariah by caste. He was a pious gentleman and without child. He took the baby home as godsent. His wife was beside herself in great joy as God had answered her prayers for a child. They looked after the child affectionately. He grew into a sterling devotee of the Lord. He took up Veena and sang the praises of the Lord with great fervour. In course of time he left his father's house due to intense devotion to the Lord and stationed himself near the banks of the sacred river Kaveri. He bathed everyday in the holy river, looked longingly towards Sreerangam and sang of the Lord playing on the Veena. The brahmins who came there objected to his presence and ordered him to go away. He could not hear them as he was lost in meditation. They threw stones at him in vain. This happened often. The saint was unaffected though blood oozed due to the hitting of stones. The effects of the hits were seen on the idol of the Lord where bloodstains became visible. The king of the country thought that some grievous fault was committed by him for the blood stains to appear on the idol. In the meantime the divine consort of Lord Sree Ranganatha prayed to him to shower his grace on the alwar and have him got to the temple so as to enthrall them with his charming music in praise of the Lord. The Lord agreed. He appeared in a dream to the local sage Saranga yogi and ordered him to

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get the alwar to his presence at once. The yogi was thunder-struck. He told all the residents about it and went to the alwar. He told the alwar about the Lord's command. The alwar hesitated and said, "I am of the lowest caste. How can I tread on the holy land of Sree Ranga Kshetra?" But Saranga would not take a no and carried him on his shoulders to the temple into the presence of the Lord. The very same brahmins who had thrown stones at him followed them singing the praise of the alwar thus:

*"Sreeloka Saarangamahaamuneendra skandhaa*
*dhiroodham Kalayaaminityam*
*Kalankaheenam Kamaneeyabhaktim kaveeswaram*
*Gaayakasaarvabhoumam!"*

"You are peerless. We worship you born on the shoulders of the great sage Saranga. You are spotless in devotion. You are the lord of the poets and king of kings among musicians." On reaching the temple, the alwar was beside himself in ecstasy of bliss. He drank in the beauty of the Lord and sang of him. He composed a prabandham called "Amalanathapiran" containing ten paasurams in praise of the Lord. Sree Ranganatha was pleased with the alwar and took him into his bosom in full view of all. Thus Tiruppani Alwar lived his purpose-ful life of unalloyed service to the Lord as his divine ministrel and earned for himself a permanent and eternal place among the foremost devotees of the Lord. Sree Ranganatha is the saviour of all, high and low, strong and weak, brahmin and panchama. Let us pray to him.

*"Karmapramaade Narakapramaade Bhaktipramaade*
*Jagataadhigaadhe*
*Ananthanaathe Jagadekanaathe Sree Ranganaathe*
*Namataam Namaami!"*

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Salutations are to the Lord of the helpless, the only Lord of the Universe, the Lord of Sreeranga who is protector of all from all risks and dangers in the performance of rituals and from deeds likely to lodge one in hell while on the path of devotion and in our sojourn in this world!

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# SRINIVASA KALYANAM

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*).

*Namah sakala kalyaanakaarine karunaatmane*
*Sreevatsa vakshase tasmai Lakshmeenaaraayanaatmane!*

"I salute Lord Srinivasa, the cause of all auspicious things, full of mercy, having the great *Sreevatsa* mark on the chest and in manifestation as Lakshminarayana."

This prayer of the sage Suka addressed to Lord Srinivasa made the Lord grant him the power of conquering the charming wiles of the damsels from heaven sent by Indra to spoil his penance. It also gave him untold virtue and *punya* which entitled him to play a vital role on the occasion of the marriage of Lord Srinivasa.

The Lord is a great boon-giver. He is born into this world not only to establish *dharma* by punishing the wicked and protecting the meek and gentle, but also to honour the boons given to devotees. He is bound by his own boons given out of immense mercy towards his devotees who win his favour by austerities, penance or *bhakti*. Thus it is that in the avatar of the Lord to marry the divine princess, Sri Srinivasa, has chosen Padmavati, the daughter of Akasaraja, who had won that favour in her earlier birth. *Srinivasa Kalyanam* is a highly blessed event, the recounting of which will bring in its wake untold bliss and prosperity to the narrator, the listener and the reader.

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In the *Treta Yuga,* there was a king called Kusadhwaja. His wife, was a pious lady, always devoted to Lord Vishnu. To them was born an extremely beautiful girl called Vedavati and when she was born, the Vedas were heard uttered in the amsa of the Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi. She was intended as a bride to the Lord Sri Maha Vishnu by her parents.

A giant demanded from Kusadhwaja the hand of Vedavati as he was captivated by her peerless beauty. When the king refused he killed him. The queen ended her life and Vedavati went to the forest to do penance and propitiate Lord Vishnu.

Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, came that way. He fell for her beauty and requested her to marry him. When she refused, he tried to force her. As he touched her, she felt herself defiled and, creating fire by her *yogaagni,* she cast herself into it, uttering a curse on Ravana saying that she would yet bring about her power by causing his ruin. She was staying in the residence of the fire-god waiting for the opportune moment to work the destruction of Ravana. The time came when Ravana came to carry away Mother Sita. The fire-god heard Sri Sita's cry for help.

Appearing before Ravana he told him: "O King of giants! Don't be deceived. This is not the real Sita. The genuine Sita is with me." So saying he took Mother Sita, kept her with his wife and brought with him Vedavati in the garb of Sita waiting for the opportune time to bring about the ruin of Ravana. Believing Agni, Ravana carried her off.

Then after Rama had killed Ravana, Sita entered the fire to prove her chastity. Two Sitas came out along with

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the fire-god. Sri Rama questioned the real Sita as to who the second one was. Mother Sita told the story of Vedavati and said: "This Vedavati had borne all troubles for my sake. Please marry her for my sake." The Lord said: "You know that in this *yuga* I am to have only one wife according to my vow and principle. Let her be. I shall marry her in a later *yuga*. Till then may she live in *Brahma Loka*." This word of Lord Srinivasa had to be carried out by him.

At the end of *Dwapara yuga*, after the Mahabharata war and soon after Vikramarka and other rulers passed away, a king of the lunar race, Suchandra by name, ruled Tonda country. He had two sons – Akasa and Tondaman by name.

Akasaraja ruled over the Tonda country with Narayanavana as his capital. He did not have children for a long time. Then he was asked to perform a sacrifice for the purpose. As he was tilling the field in that connection, he found a thousand petalled lotus. In it there was an exquisitely beautiful female child of divine brilliance. The unseen voice of the sky told him: "She is to be your daughter. Rear her up. She will bring you great name and fame." The king was immensely pleased. As the child was God-given, he thanked his good fortune and brought her up as a child of his own. As she was found in the *padma* or the lotus, she was called "Padmavati".

This was Vedavati, the Lakshmi aspect that was in the shape of Sita and stayed at Lanka, now born to have the desire of marrying Lord Vishnu fulfilled. She was growing up into a highly beautiful damsel.

In the meantime an incident happened leading to the descent of the Lord Vishnu as Srinivasa. The sage Bhrigu

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in the course of his test to find out the fittest deity to be worshipped among the trinity of gods struck at the breast of the Lord and thus defiled it. The Lord did not punish him for the transgression. So the goddess Sri Mahalakshmi whose seat it was became angry and left the Lord. She came down to the earth and stayed at Kolhapur.

The Lord felt disconsolate and did not like to live in Vaikunta without Lakshmi. He came down to the world and made his habitation on Sri Venkatadri with the help of Sri Varahadeva, his boar aspect. He had Vakulamalika, Yasoda in her previous birth, to attend on him. This was in accordance with the boon given to her in her earlier birth when she had said that she was not fully satisfied in her desire to spend her time in divine service to him and wanted him to live with her for some more time. The Lord had said to her then that he would give her that opportunity later.

Now came the time for her when the Lord was wandering aimlessly and needed someone to look after him with motherly care. Here Padmavati had grown into an exceedingly beautiful princess and she was told by the sage Narada who had read her palm that the Lord of Sri would be marrying her. Akasaraja was in search of a bridegroom suitable for her. Srinivasa came as a hunter and found her with her companions. He fell in love at first sight with her and made overtures to her. She resented his attempts and had him stoned and driven out by her companions.

But after he went away she swooned and when she revived became so full of love for his beauty and affection that she began to pine for him. Here the Lord's predicament was similar. His ailment was found out by his foster-mother Vakulamalika. She was sent to Akasaraja to

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present his proposal of marriage with Padmavati after enlightening her about the previous birth of the princess. Vakulamalika went out on her mission to the king. She came to the Agastyashrama and found the companions of Padmavati who had arrived there to perform *abhisheka* to Lord Siva in the temple there to bring all blessedness to Padmavati who was afflicted with a strange malady after she had seen the hunter.

Learning that Vakulamalika had come from Lord Venkatesa to meet Dharanidevi, the wife of Akasaraja, they promised to take her along with them after the *abhisheka* was over. She waited there with them. In the meantime the Lord, unable to brook any delay, took the form of a *Yerukala* soothsayer woman, gained admission to the presence of Dharanidevi and told her that her daughter had fallen in love with Lord Srinivasa who had come as a hunter and made advances to her. The Lord was sending an emissary to them to ask her in marriage for him. If she were not to be given in marriage to him, she would surely die within three days. So saying the Lord left her. Soon after the Lord's exit the queen found out the truth from Padmavati. She told her husband about it. Then Vakulamalika came there along with the companions of Padmavati from Agastyashrama. She was introduced to Dharanidevi and her mission on behalf of the Lord was unfolded.

Akasaraja and his wife were ecstatically happy at the blessed turn of events. On the advice of the preceptor of the Devas, the king sent word for the sage Suka who arrived at the place and praised the king for his great virtue as the Lord whom they all could not see directly even by the severest penance and austerities was going to become his son-in-law. He gladly took upon himself

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the holy task of going to Lord Srinivasa with the proposal of marriage from the king, and accomplish the divine event. The king fixed Friday, the tenth day of the bright part of the month of Vaishkha (*Vaisakha Sukla dasami*), for the performance of the marriage.

Sage Suka approached the Lord and submitted the letter of Akasaraja praying for the acceptance of the hand of his daughter in marriage by the Lord. Srinivasa was pleased and he signified his willingness for the marriage with Padmavati. The sage returned to the king with the glad news. After his exit Vakulamalika appraised the Lord as to how the bride felt highly glad and how her parents received the news.

The Lord thereupon sent letters to Lord Siva and the creator Brahma through Sesha and Garuda. Brahma came first and then Siva with his retinue. All the divinities assembled there to participate in the marriage celebration each doing his mite for its grand success. Indra was commanded to build the marriage town with all the requisites for the purpose. Siva was assigned the job of looking after the guests. Subrahmanya was kept in charge of inviting the deities and others. Manmatha was to greet all and give them betels and other things like chandan (sandalpaste) etc. in token of hearty welcome. Agni, the firegod, had to superintend the cooking; Varunadeva had to look to water supply; Vayu had to furnish sweet smelling ingredients; Kubera had to be in charge of money, clothes and other offerings; the Vasus were to look after the cleanliness and sanitation and the cleaning of vessels, while Lord Yama the god of death, was asked to punish the wicked and protect the meek and gentle during the time of marriage.

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Lord Srinivasa was asked by Brahma to perform the auspicious bath as a prelude to the marriage rituals of *punyahavachana,* worship of Ishtadevata, Kuladevata and so on. He felt the absence of the divine mother Lakshmi. He asked the sun god Surya to go bring her from Kolhapur by representing to her that he was sick and pining for her in the last throes of lifespirit. He said that she would certainly believe the version and come along with Surya because he would cover her with his power of *Maya.*

Surya accordingly went and brought Mother Lakshmi with him. The Lord appeared to be extremely unwell and unable to meet her even halfway. He put one arm on Rudra and the other on Brahma and appeared to wobble. The Mother thereupon rushed to him seeing him in that condition, worshipped his feet with *champaka* flowers and embraced him. Immediately the Lord appeared to have recovered his health. She asked for his command. He said:

*Tvayaa Raamaavataare shu kathitumsmara bhaamini*
*Vedavatyaa vivaahasya sampraaptah kaala yeshavai!*
*Tvatsannidhou vodhumenaam kaamayeham Kalou yuge*
*Vadatyeham Hrusheekeshe saa smarat poorvikaamgiram.*

She said:

*Taamangeekuru Govinda Vivaahavidhipoorvakam;*
*Iti me vachanam Krishna saphalam kuru vatsala!*

The Lord reminded herof her request to him in Ramavatara in *treta yuga* as Sita to marry Vedavati and his promise to gratify her wish. The time came now as Vedavati was born as Padmavati for that purpose. He wanted her consent for the performance of the marriage and her active presence. She prayed to him to take Vedavati as his wife going through the necessary marriage rituals.

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Everybody felt glad at the turn of events.

Goddess Lakshmi gave him the auspicious bath. Then a *Shami* tree growing near the Kumaradhara teertha was taken and planted near the Varahaswami temple and it was worshipped as the Lord's *Kuladevata*. Then the Lord felt the need for money to go through the marriage in a fitting manner. So he took Kubera, the god of wealth, aside. The Lord said to him under the Aswattha tree near the Swami Pushkarini: "Kindly lend me money for the purpose of my marriage. You can do so as per the practice of *Kaliyuga* taking interest for the money lent." Kubera agreed and a promissory note was executed written by Lord Brahma stating that Lord Srinivasa had borrowed the sum of fourteen lakhs of *Ramamudra nishkas* (coins) on the seventh day of the bright part of the month of Vaishakha in the year of Vilambi in the *Kali* age for the purpose of his marriage from Kubera and that he would clear the debt within thousand years from the date of his marriage with interest due thereon. Lord Brahma, Lord Sankara and the *Shami* tree were the witnesses to the deed.

Thus provided, Lord Srinivasa proceeded towards the king's capital for the marriage. On the way he halted at the Ashram of the sage Suka near Padmasarovar on the recommendation of Vakulamalika on behalf of the sage. Suka felt himself highly blessed and entertained the Lord and his divine retinue suitably.

The marriage of Lord Srinivasa with Princess Padmavati was then performed with great grandeur. After appropriate rituals, the *Purohits* of both sides recited the genealogy of the bride and the bridegroom. The devaguru Brihaspati acted on behalf of the king while the eminent sage Vasishta spoke for the Lord:

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Brihaspatihi:

*Atrigotra samudbhootaam Suveeryasya propoutrikaam*
*Sudharmanastu poutreemcha putreemaakaasa bhoo-*
*pateh!*
*Tvamangeekuru Govinda kanyaam kamalalochanaam*
*Yevamukte Mahaaraajo mudaa ratnaambaram dadou!*

Vasishtaha:

*Prapoutrasya Yayaateshu poutrasyaamita tejasaha*
*Soorasenasya Raajendra- Vasudevasya bhoopateh*
*Putrasya Venkatesasya gotre Vaasishta samgnite*
*Jaatasyaatrikulotpannaam Kanyaam Kanaka*
*bhooshitaam*
*Grahishyaamo vayam raajamstava putreem nrupottama!*
*Dharinisyaa saha Raajendraha Kanyaadaanaparaayanaha*
*Prahrushta hrudayah praaha Sreenivaasam Paraatparam!*

Brihaspati traced the lineage of the princess from Suveerya, his son Sudharma and then his son Akasaraja who belonged to the gotra of Atri. Vasishtha recited the geneology from Yayati and Soorasena to Vasudeva, the father of Lord Venkatesa – all belonging to the gotra of Vasistha. After this, the King and the Queen approached Lord Srinivasa with a prayer to marry their daughter; the *manglasootra* was tied round the neck of the bride amidst scenes of great rejoicing. After the marriage, the Lord had decided to stay for six months at Agastyashrama as he was on *Vivaahadeeksha* and should not climb the hill. All the divinities and Mother Lakshmi left him with the bride. Thus *Srinivasakalyanam* was performed according to the promise given by the Lord to Vedavati in his Rama-vatar. All blissful things would happen to one who

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*co*templates on this happy event. Let us Pray to him:

*Aakaasaraatsutaanaadah Aatmaanam me sadaa vatu*
*Devadevottamah paayaatdeham me Venkateswaraha !*

O! Lord Venkateswara, the Lord of the daughter of Akasaraja, O Lord of Lords! be in my mind and body and protect me.

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# MAIPPORUL NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*Yasya pranaama maatrena Samti Sarvaascha Samapadaha Sarvasiddhipradam Sambhum Tam Vande Somasundaram!*

*Mahaadeva Devesa Devaadideva Smaraare Puraare Yamaare*

*Bruvaanah smarishyaami bhaktyaa bhavantam Tato me Dayaaseela Devapraseeda!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Paramasiva who is beautiful with the moongod in his crest. By mere bowing to the Lord all riches accrue to anyone. He grants all attainments or Siddhis. I pray to the Greatest God, Mahadeva, the foe of Manmadha, Tripuras and Yama, the god of death, with the deepest devotion for his grace to descend on me.

Many are his devotees par excellence who have attained him by their single minded devotion and absolute surrender to him. Of them Maipporul Nayanar or Sadvastu Nayanar as he is also known is one who shines by his personal eminence as a unique devotee of the Lord.

He was the ruler of Chedinadu. He had Tirukkovalloor as his capital and ruled the country wisely. He knew the ins and outs of the Vedas and regarded Lord Siva as the Sat. The other gods were all Asat and illusory. He considered

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Siva bhaktas alone to be the substantial men that matter and Siva's leelas alone as worthy of note. This led to his being called Maipporul Nayanar or Sadvastu Nayanar. He renovated Saivakshetras and looked after the welfare of the devotees of the Lord. Any one in the guise of a Saivite devotee was sure to be treated right royally by him.

A neighbouring king Muktinadhan by name wanted to annex his kingdom and laid seige to the capital. He could not succeed even an iota in his purpose. The Nayanar was more than a match to him. So Muktinadhan thought of a ruse to win. As he knew that the Nayanar was soft and worshipful towards Saivite devotees he disguised himself as a Siva bhakta donning ochre clothes and went towards the fort at night. He had a dagger hidden with him. The guards allowed him in as they knew their ruler's attitude towards Siva bhaktas. Happy at his initial success, Muktinadhan went jubilantly towards the palace of the king. The sentries there opposed his entry saying that the king and queen were sleeping and none could go in. But the false sannyasin said that he had come there to initiate the king to a mantra that would give him instant victory and he should see him atonce. Believing his words they admitted him in. The queen was awake. Seeing the fake devotee she woke up her husband. The king saw his Lord Siva even in the deceitful knave. He saluted Muktinadhan and prayed to him for orders. The false muni said that he had come to give him upadesa that would fetch him immediate victory. The Lord had commanded him so.

The Nayanar was all attention. The rogue sannyasin said that no one should be with him at the time of initiation. The Nayanar asked his wife to leave him alone with the Sannyasin. She did so. The Nayanaar was ready to receive the initiation. Muktinadhan instructed him to fall on his feet before him and pray to Lord Siva at the outset. As the Nayanar knelt down in prayer, the rascal monk

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stabbed him with the dagger. The Nayanar groaned uttering the name of the Lord. A faithful follower of the Nayanar, Datta by name, came there just at the moment as he had earlier suspected the intruder and drew his sword to kill the wretch. But the Nayanar ordered him not to harm the man as he had donned the attire of the Lord's devotee. It was perhaps the Lord's desire to bring about his end that way. The man must have had the Sivam in him as he had put on that garb. So saying the Nayanar ordered his attendant to escort the man safely to the outskirts of the city and see that nothing untoward happened to him. Datta did so warding off attacks by citizens who came to know the matter. He came back and told the news to the Nayanar who was pleased with his loyaltly. The dagger was taken out and the Nayanar breathed his last uttering the holy Panchakshari of the Lord who vouchsafed to him his blissful vision and took him to Kailas.

Mysterious are the ways of Lord Siva and one cannot divine how he would give salvation to his devotees. All one can do is to submit to his will with love and devotion thinking of no other thing as being real and worthy in the same way as Maipporul Nayanar had done. So let us pray to him for his grace:–

*Mahaadeva Sambho Gireesa Trisoolin*
*Tvayeedam samastam vibhaateeti yasmaath*
*Sivaadanyathaa daivatam naabhijaane*
*Sivoham Sivoham Sivoham!*

The whole world is permeated and lighted by you, O Lord Sambho! the greatest God with the Trisool in hand. I do not esteem any God other than Lord Siva. I am Siva. I am Siva. I am Siva. Let me be permeated by Siva's energy. Let the whole world appear Sivamayam.

Om Santissantissantihi !

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# YERIBHAKTA NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples).*

*Sivaakaanta Sambho Sasaankaardhamoule*
*Mahesaana Soolin Jataajootadhaare*
*Tvameko Jagadvyaapako Viswaroopa*
*praseeda praseeda Prabho Poornaroopa!*

O Lord Sambhu! The creator of all auspiciousness, having Mother Parvathi for consort, with the crescent moon on the head, the grand Lord Easaana with the trident and the jatajoota, You are the one permeating the whole universe, whose form you are! O Lord, full and whole, shower your grace on me!

Lord Maheswara is the fulfiller of the wishes of his devotees and causes all bliss to happen to them. But he especially tests the devotion of the bhakta and if sterling and pristine all mercy and auspiciousness is vouchsafed. That is how Yeribhakta Nayanar was tested and his mettle proved.

Yeribhaktanayanar was a great saint who lived in the capital city of Karuvoor in the Konkana country. He was well-versed in Saiva lore. He made it his duty to serve the devotees of the Lord with fervent love and interest. He was a good wielder of military arms and as such he did not hesitate to venture waging any conflict to save any devotee of the Lord when in distress. Sivakamiyandar was a devotee of Lord Siva resident in the same city. He was an

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aged man. He used to offer garlands of flowers to the Lord in the local temple.

One day as he was going on that sacred task, the royal elephant of the king Keertichola Maharaja, dragged the flower basket from him and trampled on it spoiling flowers in the process. Sivakamiandar chased it with his handstaff but fell down tired. Yeribhaktanayanar who chanced to come there, found out the matter and pursuing the royal elephant, killed it with its mahout and his companion. His anger was not mitigated. Like Veerabhadra, he began dancing in fury over their bodies. The king who heard about the death of the royal elephant came there to punish the culprit. But on seeing the Nayanar he thought that the saint would not have done that deed without cause for offense. So he fell flat on the ground before the Nayanar and appealed to him to become calm. He prayed to the sage requesting him to tell what offense was committed by the dead. The Naayanar became pacified and recounted what happened. The King said that the mahout and his companion as well as the elephant met their deserts. But he should atone for their faults. So he requested the Nayanar to kill him for the offence committed by the elephant. He handed over sword to the Nayanar who would not take it. The Nayanar felt the king would kill himself if he were not to take the sword from him. He did so but in return asked the king to take his trident and kill him for having committed a crime against the devotee of the Lord. The King would not take the trident from him. So the Nayanar thought of punishing himself for having caused pain to such a devotee of the Lord. He raised his trident for the purpose when the Lord's voice was heard from the sky. "I have caused this illusion to test you. Do not do anything rash. I am pleased with you." At once rose the elephant, the mahout and his

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companion alive and whole. The flower basket of Sivakamiyandar was full with beautiful flowers of divine fragrance. The onlookers were amazed at the miracle. They realised that the Lord insisted on true devotion and would protect the sincere devotee at all costs. The Nayanar prayed to the Lord:

*"Mahesam Suresam Suraaraartnaasam*
*Vibhum Viswanaadham Vibhootyanga bhoosham*
*Viroopaaksha mindwarca Vahni trinetram*
*Sadaanandameede Sadaa Panchavaktram!*

The fivefaced Lord Mahesa, the Lord of the Devas, the annihilator of their enemies, the Lord of the universe whose decoration for the body is afforded by the sacred ash, who is having the fire god, the moon god and the sun god for eyes, may that three eyed Lord give us everlasting bliss always!

The Nayanar was honoured greatly by the king and after a long life of pure service to the Lord and his devotees reached Kailas.

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# TOWARDS HEAVEN ON EARTH

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

In these days of materialism and atheism it is the bounden duty of the devout to strive towards the establishment of the kingdom of God on Earth. The Lord can be contemplated upon as Saguna Brahman or the Supreme God with attributes. The worship of Saguna Brahman is taken to by devotees who desire happiness in this life and thereafter and want certain prayers of theirs answered. They worship the appropriate forms of the Lord for the purpose. The Lord in his infinite mercy assumes the form prayed to by them and does the needful as desired if they surrender unto Him whole-heartedly without any reservation. The worship of Nirguna Brahman is resorted to by yogins and other highly spiritually developed souls for attaining salvation. They meditate on the infinite Lord without shape, form or attributes being highly gifted with the spiritual ability necessary for the purpose of theirs. But the ordinary devotees who are not so gifted, worship Saguna Brahman contemplating upon him as having a particular shape, form and attributes and representing him in an idol or image. The idol is placed in a temple and consecrated with rituals and holy mantras and yantras prescribed as appropriate and relevant to the particular form contemplated on. These mantras and yantras generate the necessary spiritual vibrations for the worshipper to feel the presence of the Lord in the idol before him. They are to be mentioned and fixed properly and the devotees should

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be initiated into the why and wherefore of the same. Each temple containing the Lord in the form and aspect in which the devotees visualise him is thus a spiritual store-house wherein they can obtain the necessary grace of the All merciful Lord who verily listens to their sincere prayers.

It is true that the Lord is every where and in every thing. Nothing exists without him. He has himself said in the Geeta thus: *Mattah parataram Naanyatkimchidasti, Dhanamajaya! Mayisarvamidam protam sootrey maniganaaiva!"*

He said that he permeates everything even as a string going through a set of wellknit gems.

Again he has said: *"Eeswarassarva bhootaanaam hruddeserjuna tishttati"* – the Lord is found seated in the hearts of all beings. The Upanishad said: *"Eesaavaasyamidagum sarvam"* – the whole Universe is the residence of the Lord. Though so, all cannot percieve him, unless they are highly spiritually advanced. So he is sought to be worshipped at a certain place consecrated and set apart for the purpose and thus temples have come into being.

To the worshipper the idol is the living God. The Lord appears in it to the sincere believer, speaks to him as it were and grants his cherished desires. *"Kadavul Kandavarku Kalkandu: kaanaadavarku kalkundu"*. The Lord is sweet sugarcandy to those that perceive and to those that do not, he is hard unbreakable rock. Just as though the milk of the cow is spread all over inside its body, we can get milk only from its udder and not from its ears, horns or any other part, so also, though God is omnipresent and is everywhere in the Universe and in it all beings, you cannot perceive him at all places easily. You have to go to places

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sanctified by the saints and devotees for having the auspicious darshan of the Lord.

The music broadcast by the Radio at Madras or Newyork goes all over to the world. People at a distance cannot hear it. They can hear it only when they tune their radio to the proper wave length. So it is that we can espy the Lord by frequenting temples consecrated to him at different places high-lighted into significance and spiritual power by regular correct poojas by saints and holymen.

Everything depends on the stage of development of the mind of the aspirant. Just as the mother gives gruel, cooked rice or milk according to the digestive abilities of the children, so also methods of devotion and worship to the Lord are prescribed according to the abilities of the devotees. Here comes the Guru into the picture.

The Lord is in everybody. But he is not perceived by all. Hence the miseries and sorrows of the world. The stars are seen only in the night in the sky. But they are not visible after the dawn of the sun. Is it proper to say that therefore that the stars cease to exist in the sky during day time? In your state of Ajnaana you may not be able to see the Lord. On that account you should not deny the existence of God. Do not fritter away your precious God-given gift of human life without meditation upon God. There is a difference between men and animals. Men have the power of discrimination and reasoning. The animals do not have that power. Men therefore can think for themselves and achieve the highest goal of becoming one with the Supreme Brahman. They should not waste this gift. When it is raining, if you keep quiet without ploughing the fields, you cannot reap the benefit of the rain. Great saints like Appar Swamighal and Nammalwar said

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the same thing and they have cautioned that the worship of the Lord is the only way for salvation.

So dedicate yourself to serving the Lord who is of the Archa form in the temple in the first instance.

Then you can progress further. It is due to your poorva punya that you are able to get this opportunity of service to the Lord. Utilise it to the best of your ability. Then Heaven will surely come to Earth for you. May Baladandayudhapani Murugan bless you all and the Temple Society who have become his instruments in this sacred endeavour!

*"Sahanaavavatu Sahanau bhunaktu, Sahaveeryam karavaavahai, tejaswinaavadheeta mastu, maavidvishaa-vahai!"* Let us be together, participate together, acquire necessary power and energy to win the grace of the Lord and not allow any ill will to creep in between us! Share the Universal love of the Lord with love.

Om Santissantissantihi!

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# TIRUKURIPPUTONDA NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

"O Lord! Shower your grace upon me! Thou, who are the perfect, who are the Universe and who permeates all over the cosmos! You are the only one absolute, Lord of Sivaa, the Devi. O Lord Sambho, adorned with the crescent moon in the crest, the great Easana, wielder of the Trisool, with matted locks of hair, show mercy to me."

This was the incessant prayer of Tiru Kurippu Tonda Nayanar. He was a perfect devotee of Lord Siva. He was a pious brahmin and he lived in the sacred city of Kancheepuram. To him duty was service to the votaries of Lord Siva. He offered to clean the clothes of the sacred men, the wearers of the sacred ash. He washed their clothes with readiness and gusto. They shone brilliantly after his handling of them. As a result of this selfless service, he was known by every one as Tiru Kurippu Tondan i.e. the person that offers service to humanity very readily without hesitation. As he was at the work of cleaning the clothes, he chanted the name of Lord Maheswara. It was his firm conviction that even as he washed the dirt off the clothes of the saintly, he was washing away the results of his past karmas or actions. He felt that he was nearing godhead by such service to the devotees of Lord Parameswara. He went on in this manner joyously and was enjoying spiritual bliss in wholetime contemplation of the Lord. The Lord

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took it into his mind to test him and take him into his fold. Wearing torn clothes he appeared before the Nayanar as a holy mendicant wearing the sacred ash and Rudrakhsa beads. The Nayanar fell on his feet before him and as was his wont offered to clean his clothing. The Lord himself was overcome with the warmth of feeling exhibited by the Nayanar. He told the Nayanar that he needed the clothing that very evening as there was nothing else with him to cover his body. The Nayanar would be committing a heinous crime if he were to fail to do so. The Nayanar agreed readily to finish the work within the stipulated time. Tiru Kurippu Tonda Nayanar did his work neatly. The clothes were washed. But unfortunately there was an unexpected heavy downpour of rain. There was no chance of the clothes drying. There was no prospect of the sun peeping through even for a moment. The rain grew in intensity. The Nayanar felt frustrated. He became depressed thinking about the fate of the old man without his only garments. Verily he had failed in his duty. How could he face that saintly person without carrying out his behest? It was unthinkable. Better make short work of himself. So thinking he resolved to strike his head against the stone and end his life. As he was about to do so, the Lord appeared before him with the goddess Uma. He told the Nayanar that he was pleased with his devotion. It was only a test to broadcast his real worth to the world. The Nayanar was in ecstasy. He prayed:

*Praphulla neelotpala lochanaayai*
*Vikaasa pankeruhalochanaaya*
*Jagajjananyai Jagadekapitrey*
*Namassivaayaicha Namassivaaya*

My salutations are offered to the Universal Mother and the Universal Father of the wideopen Neelotpala eyes and of the

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fullblown Lotus eyes, Sivaa and Siva, Parvati and Parameswara.

So praying he fell on his feet and offered obesance to the Divine Couple. He prayed for salvation. The Lord raised him and showered his grace on him. He took the Nayanar to Kailas in full public view. Thus the Nayanar had proved that service done to the devotees of the Lord is certainly service rendered unto the Lord himself who will be immensely pleased when his devotee is given proper hospitality and made comfortable. It behoves one well therefore to offer unstinting service to the Lord's Bhaktas.

Om Tatsat!

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# SRI RAMANUJACHARYA

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples*)

*Namaami Naaraayana paadapankajam*
*Karomi Naaraayana poojanam sadaa*
*Vadaami Naaraayana naama nirmalam*
*Smaraami Naaraayana tattwamavyayam*

I offer my salutations to the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. I perform the worship of Lord Narayana always. I utter the sacred name of Narayana. I contemplate on the eternal Narayana principle.

This was the creed of Sri Ramanujacharya, the savant of Vaishnavism, who propagated the worship of Lord Narayana as the sole means to attain salvation. So it is that the devotees of Sri Ramanuja pray to him thus:

*"Yo nitya machyutapadaambuja yugmarukma*
*vyaamohatastaditaraani trunaaya menai*
*Asmadgurorbhagavatosya dayaikasindho*
*Raamaanujasya charanow saranam prapadyai."*

Salutation is offered by every Vaishnavite devotee to his Acharya Sri Bhagavadramanuja for whom every thing other than the lotus feet of the Lord Narayana is straw, and who is an ocean of kindness with infatuation for the Lord's feet. The surrender to the Acharya is complete.

Sri Ramanuja came into the world at a time when people were confused by the intellectual gyrations that

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went under the banner of religion. There were the Buddhists, the Jains, the Saivites, the Advaitins and a lot of others advocating their principles alongside of Vaishnavism. Interpretations of the Vedas and the Upanishadic teachings varied. They were taught incorrectly and unrealistically. Sri Ramanujacharya's advent stemmed the rot. It was as if Lord Narayana Himself had taken the responsibility to put mankind on the right path through the birth of this spiritual beacon-light at the time.

Sri Ramanujacharya was born in the year Pingala (1017 A.D.) on the fifth day (Panchami) of the bright part (Sukla paksha) of the month of Chaitra at Sri Perumbudur, about ten miles from Trivellore. His father was the great scholar devotee, Kesava Yajwa, of Harita gotra. His mother was Kantimati, one of the sisters of Sri Sailapoorna, who was in the service of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumalai. For a long time, no child was born to them. As a believer in the Sastras, he performed *putrakameshti* contemplating upon Lord Parthasarathi, after performing seabath on a Lunar eclipse day. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and promised that an aspect of his would be born to them. Kesava Yajwa was gratified. Sri Ramanuja took birth under the asterism Ardra in Karkataka Lagna. Every one felt at the time on seeing his effulgent personality and aura about him that Adisesha, the inseparable couch of the Lord, had incarnated as the son of the pious couple. The news of his birth delighted Sri Sailappoorna, or Peria Tirumala Nambi as he was called, and he came specially to participate in the naming function. He named the baby "Ramanuja" as he found all the attributes of Lakshmana, brother of Lord Sri Rama. The boy showed astonishing ability in mastering the Vedas and the Vedangas and became a scholar and devotee by his own rights. At the age of sixteen, his father

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got him married to a beautiful girl called Tanjammal, belonging to a chaste Vaishnava family. Unfortunately, Kesava Yajwa passed away shortly afterwards. It was a great shock to Ramanuja. But he got over it and devoted his time to the learning of the sacred lore and the worship of Lord Sri Mahavishnu. He desired to attain eminence as a unique scholar of the highest ability. He found that at that time Yadavaprakasa, a renowned Advaitin of Kancheepuram, was in the limelight as a learned preceptor to all aspirants. So he accepted the tutelage of that pundit and lived at the place with his wife. His cousin, Govinda Bhattar, also joined him there. Together, they became wellversed in the scriptures and the Vedas.

Yadavaprakasa was struck with wonder at the alacrity and intellectual attainment of Ramanuja, who became proficient in all the Sastras with little effort. Ramanuja became so learned that he found loopholes in the teachings of Yadavapraksa, who was twisting the meanings of the texts according to his whim and fancy. One day, the preceptor was giving the meaning of the phrases: *Tasya yathaa kapyaasam Pundareekamakshini*–in the Chhandyoga Sruti. He began to give an absurd and perverted meaning for the word *Kapyaasam*, which he said meant the buttocks of a monkey, thus comparing the eyes of the Lord to the back portion of a monkey. As he heard this, tears rolled down from the eyes of Ramanuja and fell on the thigh of the preceptor for whom he was giving an oil massage at that time. The latter asked him the reason for his tears. Ramanuja said that he felt grieved at the absurd and ridiculous meaning he had given for the Sruti phrase. Ordered by Yadavaprakasa as to the interpretation he would give, Ramanuja proceeded thus: Taking the generative meanings of kapi, he said: *Kam:* water, *pibateeti kapihi* – Lord

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Surya who drinks it: *Tena Asyati – vikaasayae iti kapyaasam:* it means that is made by Lord Surya to blossom. Also *kam*: water, *pibateeti kapihi:* the stalk of the Lotus; *Tasmin Aste iti kapyasam:* shining with the brilliance of the Lotus though cut off. Again *Kam:* water, *Asabhuvi Api poorva-kaha:* That which was in the water before. Taking all the derivative meanings as a whole, Ramanuja said that it meant *Gambheeraambhassamudbhhoota Sumrushtanaala Ravikara vikasitapundareeka dalaamalaayate kshanaha*. That is the One having broad shining eyes like the wide petals of a fullblown lotus which is from deep waters and made to blossom by the rays of the sun-god. The preceptor found the meaning very appropriate. Instead of commending him for it, he asked him not to come any more to learn under his monitoring as the meaning given by him was objected to.

Ramanuja accordingly stepped away from his academy of learning. After some time Yadavaprakasa wanted to get rid of Ramanuja by an evil plan. He sent word to the latter to follow him on a pilgrimage to Varanasi along with other disciples. The unsuspecting Ramanuja went with him. On their way when they neared the Vindhya terrain, his cousin Govinda Bhattar could contact him alone and told him about the plan of the preceptor to get him killed. Ramanuja was deeply chagrined when he came to know of the evil intention of his teacher. He separated himself from the party without their knowledge and sat down under a tree brooding sadly over his fate. Just then, a tribal came there with his wife. On accosting them, he found that they were going to Kancheepuram. Ramanuja's heart jumped with joy and thankfulness to the All-Merciful Narayana, for he had now someone to guide him. He prayed to them to take him also along with them. They complied with his request. They came at last to a certain

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region when it became dark. They rested there. The woman wanted water. The husband said that there was a well nearby and they could have plenty of it in the morning. It dawned. Ramanuja found dawn, but the tribals were not there. Presuming that they had gone to the well nearby mentioned by the man, he went on to a well which was some yards away. He could not find them. He found a group of people in the garden at the well. He enquired of them as to what town it was. His joy knew no bounds when he knew it was good old Kancheepuram. He felt the couple who were his companions were no other entities than Lord Varadaraja and Divine Mother Perundevi. From that day he devoted himself vigorously to the whole time service of Lord Varadaraja, offering water for Tirumanjanam or abhishekam.

In the meantime, Yadavaprakasa shed crocodile tears at the loss of Ramanuja thinking that some wild animal must have devoured him, and went to Varanasi. There he converted Govinda Bhattar into a Saivite by a ruse. The latter went to Sri Kalahasti and settled there doing service to Lord Kalahasteeswara. On his return from Varanasi, Yadavaprakasa was stunned to see Ramanuja alive and kicking, hale and healthy. Learning as to what had happened he offered to teach Ramanuja once again. The latter continued to learn as his disciple. Just at that time, the great sage of Visishtadvaita, Alavandar, came from Sri-Rangam to Kancheepuram and found out the renown and repute of Ramanuja. He felt that the latter would be the fittest person to become the beacon-light of Vaishnava Darsana. He prayed to Lord Varadaraja to lend the services of Ramanuja. Ramanuja's fame spread far and wide when he was able to exorcise the evil spirit that assailed the daughter of the local king. This increased the jealousy of

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Yadavaprakasa. He fell out with the disciple once again when there was a dispute about the interpretation of the sruti-vakyas: *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* "Neha naa Naas-ti kinchana." While the Acharya taught them in the advaitic sense, Ramanuja spoke of them in the Visishtadvaitic sense. This estranged them and they broke away. Ramanuja sought the shelter of Tirukkacchi Nambi and continued his usual service of the Lord. Coming to know of this, Alavandar sent an emissary from Sri Rangam to fetch him. It was Peria Nambi that came on the mission. He recited a sloka of Alavandar, the meaning of which attracted Ramanuja to him. Ramanuja learnt that the composer of the sloka was Alavandar and undertook to go along with him to have the darsan of the holy man. They travelled to Sri Rangam. But he found, on reaching the outskirts of the city, groups of Vaishnavite devotees on the sand mounds at the river Kaveri. He learnt that they were all gathered there to perform the last rites to the saint Alavandar, who had breathed his last that day. Ramanuja was deeply grieved when he heard the news. He felt it to be a great misfortune that deprived him of direct contact with that savant while he was alive. He went with Peria Nambi to pay last respects to the mortal remains of the sage. He found that three fingers of the right hand were closed. It was unusual. He guessed that the saint might have had some unfulfilled desires, which he was counting on his fingers at the time of his departure from this mundane world. He asked some of the closest disciples of Alavandar about it. He found out that the sage desired that an eminent person should be installed to carry on visishtadvaita movement as propounded by Parasara, who had brought to light the *Vishnu Purana* and thereby made known *Paratattwa* to all; that a commentary should be written for Vyasa's *Brahma Sutras* with visishtadvaitic view; and a detailed

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commentary of Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymozhi* should be made available to all. Thereupon Ramanuja declared within the hearing of all that the Acharya willing he would strive for the fulfilment of his desires. Lo! at once, the fingers stretched to the intense amazement of all. On witnessing the miracle, he was acclaimed as the worthy successor of Alavandar to establish the reign of visishtadvaita firmly in the country. Ramanuja immediately returned to Kancheepuram in a huff, because Lord Ranganatha had not allowed him to meet Alavandar in flesh and blood. He hurried to Tirukkacchi Nambi for guidance. His wife showed disrespect to the Nambi and he was sore with her for that. On a direction from Lord Varadaraja, Tirukkacchi Nambi advised him to go to Sri Rangam to Peria Nambi for guidance.

At the very same time, Peria Nambi was also on his way to take Ramanuja to Sri Rangam and make him the leader of visishtadvaita. Both he and Ramanuja met at Madurantakam. Peria Nambi performed Panchasamskaras to him and taught him the sacred mantra of Vaishnavism. They both proceeded to Kancheepuram. There they lived together. The Nambi taught him everything that he had learnt from Alavandar. Here Ramanuja's wife picked up a quarrel with the Nambi's wife while dragging water from the well. The Nambi did not want to complicate matters further and so left for Sri Rangam without the knowledge of Ramanuja. This made Ramanuja highly angry with his wife, who had earlier denied food to a Vaishnavite pilgrim despite having food in the house. He thought that further living with her was impossible for him. So he sent her away to her parents' house for good and took sannyasa before Lord Varadaraja, regarding the Lord as the Acharya. He came thereupon to be regarded as Ramanuja Muni and Yati Raja. He now decided to accomplish the promises made before the mortal remains

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of Alavandar. He wanted the assistance ofa trustworthy co-worker to propagate the principles of visishtadvaita. He thought of Govinda Bhattar as the proper person. But the latter was turned Saivite.

He felt that his uncle, Peria Tirumala Nambi was the right person to reconvert him to his creed. So, on his request Peria Tirumala Nambi went to Sri Kalahasti and after a mammoth spiritual and philosophical tussle with him, brought him back to the Vaishnavite fold. Govinda Bhattar now joined Ramanuja in his mission. He became the staunch follower of the Acharya and went by the name of Embar. In the meantime, Ramanuja's erstwhile teacher, Yadavaprakasa, on his mother's persuasion and on being convinced about the rightness of the preachings of his former disciple, approached Ramanuja in all humility and became his ardent follower. He was given the name Govinda Jiyyar and he did a great deal for the spread of visishtadvaita till his last breath. Two more persons of note belonging to Kooram, a neighbouring village, Kuresan and Kandadi Mudaliyandan, became his close disciples. Sri Ramanuja preached eloquently both in Sanskrit and Tamil the glory of the All-Merciful Lord Srimannarayana and His Divine spouse Goddess Maha Lakshmi.

He proclaimed Brahman with attributes and without attributes and declared that one was not higher than the other. They were the two eternal and real phases in the One Brahman. As the Brahman without attributes, that was the Absolute. As the Saguna Brahman, that was Brahman Lord Srimannarayana, the maker of Heaven and earth and the lover of every single soul. The love we bear to Srimannarayana is one way of realising the mystic union that binds the Lover to His beloved, God to us. Each soul exists as an individuality, as distinct from another soul.

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Yet, both live in God and are of his nature. By His grace, every soul evolves and blossoms. But evolution means feeling more and more of the grace of Sri Maha Vishnu and partaking of His nature. The ultimate goal of evolution is not loss of identity in the Lord like a drop vanishing in the ocean. We shall ever retain our individual consciousness. We shall enter the Light, but we shall never touch the Flame. His teachings appealed to every one. He went to Sri Rangam and was installed there as the head of the Visishtadvaitic Mutt. He devoted service to Lord Ranganatha. He reformed the manner of worship there and systematised the routine rituals. He corrected the errors in the management of the temple and made it perfect and smooth. These services earned for him the title "Udayavar" from the Lord Himself.

He tried to delve deep into visishtadvaita philosophy by obtaining instruction from Goshtipoorna at Tirukkotiyur. He could succeed only in his eighteenth visit to that saintly man. He was taught the eight lettered Mahamantra, the charama sloka beginning with "Sarvadharmaan', and the Dvaya mantra, collectively known as Rahasya Traya along with other intricate teachings of visishtadvaita, under strict promise of secrecy. Ramanuja was so filled with compassion for all, that he desired every one to know the Mahamantra. So he summoned all together and proclaimed the Mahamantra to them in public without any reservation. He declared that deep and unadulterated love to Lord Mahavishnu and chanting the Mahamantra would lead them all to salvation. Goshtipoorna was very angry when he heard this. He demanded an explanation for Ramanuja's action, saying that he would rot in hell for transgressing his promise. Ramanuja calmly answered that he was prepared to rot in hell for the sake of all souls who also had a right

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to get salvation. Goshtipoorna became changed and commended the Yatiraja for his action.

Ramanuja defeated the famous scholar-monk, Kandur Yajnamoorthy, in a sastric dispute with divine grace and made him a Vaishnavite. The latter became one of the foremost disciples of Ramanuja and his school of thought. He came to be known as Perarulaalapperumal Emberumanar.

Ramanuja wrote his renowned *Sri Bashya* in which all the tenets and features of visishtadvaita were vividly portrayed. He went on a missionary tour throughout the length and breadth of the country. He set right temple worship in many places. He pleased Goddess Saraswati at Kashmir and he was bestowed the title of Bashyakara by her. He came to Tirupati, where formerly he was having Ramayana discourses with Peria Tirumala Nambi. He settled the controversy that was raging there at the time about the identity of Lord Venkateswara, whom he demonstrated to be no other than Lord Mahavishnu. He did a great deal for establishing the routine of the temple ritual there on a regular basis and he is uniquely honoured by a shrine for him having been built in the precincts of the Tirumala near the Lord's abode by the Vaishnavite community. It is but proper, for how can the Lord be ever separate from his couch whose incarnation is Ramanuja!

At the age of seventy he returned to Sri Rangam and resumed his service to Lord Ranganatha. He adopted Kurukesa, the son of Srisailapoorna, as his spiritual son The latter wrote a classical commentary on *Tiruvaymozhi*. Kurukesa's two sons were named by Ramanuja as Parasara and Raman Pillai. They were entrusted to the care of Embar. Parasara later became a renowned exponent of Visishtadvaita. Now, the Chola King began to persecute

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the vaishnavites. Ramanuja had to seek shelter in Thondanur, the place of the Hoysala King, Bitti Deva. He drove out the evil spirit that haunted the king's daughter and became firmly established there. He renovated the temple at Melkote. He got the copper idol for it from the house of a Muhammadan princess, as directed by a divine vision, by performing the miracle of making it run towards him and reach his hands. On his return journey from Delhi, he was protected by the people of the untouchable community from his enemies. He was compassionate towards them and taught them the Mahamantra for their salvation. He made it a rule that they should be allowed entry into the temple on a certain day in the year. This is followed even now. The Chola king, Kulottunga, who had persecuted the Vaishnavites and who had the eyes of Mahapoorna and Kuresa plucked out thus blinding them, died. Learning about it, Ramanuja came over to Sri Rangam. He retrieved the idol of Govindaraja, which was hidden in the hills of Tirumala after it was taken away from Chidambaram when Kulottunga Chola threatened to consign it to the sea. He had the temple of Govindaraja-swami built at the foot of the hills at Tirupati and made arrangements for worship there. He lived for eleven years after his return to Sri Rangam before he went to the abode of the Lord. He lived the fullest life for 125 years and left the mortal coil on the tenth day of the bright part of the month of Magha in the year Pingala, that is 1137 A.D. His works, *Sri Bhashya, Vedantasara, Vedanta Deepa, Vedartha Sangraha, SriRanga Gadyam, Vaikuntha Gadyam, Saranagati Gadyam* and others reveal his intense scholar-ship and devotion. No Vaishnava can afford to ignore the great Acharya who presented a religion of Universal love and salvation through bhakti, prayer and saranagati or complete surrender to Lord Sri Mahavishnu.

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# SRI MAARA NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*"Deena maanavaali Kaamadhenavey Namassivaaya*
*Soonabaana daaha drukkrusaanavey Namassivaaya*
*Swaanuraaga Bhakta Ratnasaanavey Namassivaaya*
*Daanavaandhakaara chanda Bhanavey Namassivaaya!"*

Salutations are for Lord Siva who is the Kamadhenu or celestial cow fulfilling the desires of the miserable humans who petition for his help, who is the Lord of Death for all pranks to which one is subjected by Cupid's arrows, who is the Mount of gems to his loving devotees and who is the radiantly severe Sun chasing away the darkness created by the Rakshasas.

One who prays to Lord Siva with total surrender need have no fear. He will never be ruined. The Lord will save him if only his faith never wavers. He will test the purity of mind and the devotion of the devotee very severely too. One who stands the test successfully is sure to be redeemed.

The life of Maara Nayanar is a brilliant illustration to the point. Maara Nayanar lived in the village of Ilayaankudi. He was a ryot of means. He was a real devotee of Lord Siva. He offered his worship to the Lord the first thing in the morning. He looked after the needs of every Sivabhakta who came to him for help. The more he did so, the prosperous did he become.

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Lord Siva was pleased with his devotion. He wanted to test his love towards him and his devotees. He made the Nayanar lose his property and reduced him to penury. Nothing daunted, the Nayanar continued his worship of the Lord and Sivabhaktas. He sold even the Thali or the Mangalasootra of his wife in the process. One day he felt dejected thinking of what to do to carry on his Kainkarya to the Lord and his devotees. That night it rained very heavily. An old man who was in the attire of a Sivabhakta came to his house and sought shelter and food. The Nayanar requested him to rest a while before his hunger could be satisfied. He consulted his wife as to what to do. She had great trust in the Lord like her husband. She asked him to go to the fields and get the corn just sown as seeds. Some vegetable leaf might also be brought. She said that Trinetra would look after their needs. His kindly eye was on them. The Nayanar went in the rain praying to the Lord for succour.

*"Bhaktajeevanameesancha bhaktaanugraha kaataram*
*Vedaanasaktaayam stotum kimaham stoumi Prabhum!"*

"O Lord! You are the lifespirit of your devotees. You are always on pins and needles to help your worshippers. Even the Vedas are unable to sing your praise. How can I do so? Please help me now." He was able to collect enough seedcorn and some vegetable leaves. His wife was able to cook them with great difficulty. When everything was ready, the Nayanar went to the guest. He found the old man to be the Lord himself who appeared in his true shape along with Goddess Parvati. He was beside himself with ecstasy of joy. He praised the Lord.

*"Jaya Sarvajagannaadha Jaya Chandravibhooshana*
*Jaya Sailasutaakaanta Jaya Bhaktaparaayana*

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*Tvameyva kartaa karanam kaaranam karmacha Prabho*
*Tatphalam tatpradaataacha tatsaaksheecha niranjanaha!*

"Hail O the Lord of the Universe and all! Victory to Thee! O the one adorned by the Moon! Victory to Thee! O Lord of Mother Parvathi! Victory to Thee! the Everloving patron of devotees! You are the Cause, the Deed the Causative Power, the Doer and the did and the Done. You are the vouchsafer of results of all actions and the Seer unattached to anything."

The Lord was pleased with the couple and took them along with him to his divine abode. The Nayanar's name stood for ever as the best devotee of the Lord. The true devotee of Lord Siva is sure to get ultimate salvation.

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# KANAMPULLA NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples.)*

*"Vrushendrayaanaaya Puraantakaaya Namah*
*Prasiddhaaya Mahoushadhaaya*
*Namostu Bhaktaa bhimatapradaaya Namostu*
*Sarvaartiharaya tubhyam!"*

I salute the Lord with the Bull as his mount, the ender of Tripuraas, the famed and illustrious medicator, the gratifier of the desires of devotees and the wiperout of all troubles that assail humans.

Lord Siva is the protector of all and anyone who surrenders to him wholeheartedly is sure to receive his grace in abundance. Kanampulla nayanar completely surrendered himself to Lord Siva. He was always of the mind of Siva and all his acts were as votive offerings to him. He offered service to the Lord unstintingly. He belonged to Irukkivelur which was situated on the southern bank of Vellaru. A devotee of Lord Nataraja, he looked upon the world as the manifestation of the Lord. All the things of the world were of little value to him. He considered service to Lord Siva alone as lasting and productive of spiritual bliss. He was rich beyond dreams. So also was he rich in wisdom, generosity and steadfast faith to Lord Siva. He performed deepakainkaryam-lighting of lamps, in temples. He spent all his riches for the benefit of the saivite sadhus and for temples. He exhausted all his wealth in this manner.

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Poverty began to stare him in the face. But he did not lose heart. He persisted in his service of lights in temples. He went to Chidambaram. He felt rejuvenated. He began his usual service of deepakainkaryam in the temple of Tirupuliyavaram nearby. He felt the cosmic dancer's dancing feet in his heart. Now the time for redemption approached. He had no money to get oil for the lamps. He could not beg. So he cut grass and by the money got by its sale he continued his lighting service. One day his grass could not be sold. Then undaunted he improvised lighting by tying the grass into tiny bundles and burning them. But then they became extinct. He pulled out his hair and began to feed the fire. The Lord was pleased with this sacrifice and showered his grace on him. The nayanar became elevated and reached the abode of the Lord who blessed him with eternal light.

This is an object lesson to all those who seek the Lord. All thoughts of self, ego, desires, considerations and feelings other than about the Lord must be thrown overboard and the Lord should be the sole object of our concern. Let us pray to him to bless us with the strength of mind, body and action to serve him even as Kanampulla Nayanar had served him.

*Sevakaaya me Mruda prasaadate Namassivaaya*
*Bhaavalabhya taavaka prasaadate Namaha*
*Paavakaaksha Devapoojyapaadate Namaha*
*Taavakaanghribhaktadatta modate Namassivaaya!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Siva praying for his grace and bliss by offering sterling service to his lotus feet physically and mentally with all thoughts on him always. He is pleased with the devotion of sincere bhaktas who do such service and looks after them.

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# THE GLORY OF GAYATRI

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamigal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*Muktaavidruma hemaneela dhavalacchaayairmukhai*
*strayeekshanaihi*
*Yuktaam Indunibaddha ratnamakutaam tattvaartha-*
*varnaatmikaam*
*Gaayatreem varadaabhayaamkusa kasaam subhram*
*kapaalam gadaam*
*Samkhamchakra madhaarvindayugalam hastairvahan-*
*teem Bhaje!*

*I worship the Divine Mother Gayatri whose (five) faces (each) with three eyes are effulgent with pearly white, red, yellow, blue and white hues whose crown is studded with gems and crested with the Moon, whose figure is the Varnas (letters) which is itself the highest principle, who bestows boons and fearlessness through hands in that posture and who holds the goad, the noose, the skull, the mace, the conch and the discus in the other hands while holding a lotus in each of the remaining two hands.*

This is the form of Parasakti worshipped through the Gayatri Mantra. This form represents the microcosm and the macrocosm. The crown is the Pranava. The Varnas are the 24 letters connoting the 24 Tattvas and her ten weapons are the ten words addressed to the Parabraham in the Mantra. The five faces represent the five directions; the three eyes represent the Moon, the Sun and Fire. The

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Indukala is Chitsakti. Her ten weapons are the instruments for bestowing boons, fearlessness, achievements of goal, attempts to that end, engendering pure Jnana, sharp intellect (Buddhi), sweet environment, destruction of ignorance or Avidya and realisation in Saguna and Nirguna stages.

This form of the goddess is her collective form while she appears diversely in the three parts of the day, namely dawn, midday and sunset. The sage Marichi describes her three forms thus:

*Poorvasandhyaam Koumaareem, raktavarnaam, hamsavaahineem, akshasootra kamandalu yagnopaveetadhaarineem, Brahmadevataam, Gaayatreem naama;*

*Madyaahne sandyaam youvanavateem, svetavarnaam, vrishabhavaahineem rudraakshaardha chandratrisooladhaarineem, Rudradevataam, Saavitreem naama;*

*Saayamsandyaam salakshanaam, syaamalaam, Garudavaahineem, sarvaabharana bhooshitaam samkhachakradhaarineem, Saraswateem naama.*

The Divine Mother appears at dawn in the form of Gayatri as a young girl red in colour, riding the swan, having the Kamandalu, Rudraksha beads and the sacred thread in all the aspects of Brahma, the creator. At midday she appears white in colour, youthful and blossomed, having the ox for her mount and having all the aspects of Rudra with Rudraksha beads, crescent moon as well as Trisool. She goes by the name Savitri at this juncture. At twilight in the evening she appears as Saraswati with all auspicious attributes, dark in colour, bedecked with all jewels, bearing the conch and the discus and riding the eagle Garuda with Vishnu aspect.

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In *anushtana* the *Mantra* goes thus:

*Praatardhyaayaami Gaayatreem Ravimandalamadhyagaam*
*Rigvedamucchaarayamteem Raktavarnaam kumaarikaam*
*Akshamaalaakaraam Brahmadaivatyaam hamsavaahanaam*
*Madhyamdinetu Saavitreem Ravimandalamadhyagaam*
*Yajurvedamvyaaharanteem Svetaam soolakaraam subhaam*
*Yuvateem Rudradaivatyaam Dhyaayaami vrishabhavaahanaam*
*Saaym Saraswateem syaamaam Ravimandalamadhyagaam*
*Saamavedamvyaharanteem chakraayudhadharaam subhaam*
*Dhyaayaami Vishnudaivatyaam Vruddhaam Garudavaahnaam!*

The deity is of Rigveda at dawn, Yajurveda at midday and Samaveda at the evening twilight. She is a maiden at dawn, middleaged at midday and old at evening twilight Thus the Divine Mother is Trimoorthyatmika in her collective form. She is Brahma, Rudra and Vishnu in one. The invocation is a prayer and a Mantra. The Mantra when chanted invokes Savita or the spiritual sun and through him Parabrahma. It has got limitless power and this power is exhorted by Upasana and Japa or repetition. The Parabrahma or the Absolute becomes Siva-Sakti when manifest. Savitri is the Sakti corresponding to Savita. The main work of this Savitri or Gayatri is to free the souls from the tentacles of Samsara, brought about by illusion or Maya. Realisation of the true nature of the Self can be attained by identifying oneself with the three Devis – Gayatri,

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Savitri and Saraswati corresponding to sunrise, noon and sunset. The symbology thus rests on the Trinity. Each of the Devis gives the boons that she is expected to give. But Gayatri in the Samishti or whole form gives the very Iswara to the worshipper. Her worship through the Mantra leads to totality of knowledge. That is why it is called Vedamata or mother of the Vedas. The experience of the sages shows that the best way for knowing the Vedas and their import is to learn the truth through the Gayatri.

The aspirant who utters the Gayatri Mantra with devotion is sure to become a seer by controlling the senses, steadying his mind and concentrating on Parabrahama resident in the spiritual orb of the sun, indistinct and inseparable from the Devi. Viswamitra who is the seer for this Mantra acquired powers which could annihilate all foes, internal and external, and which could create even a duplicate universe. He could do Pratisrishti. He could create another heaven on a par with the Swarga of the minor gods. It had given the very Iswara, Rama, to him as a disciple.

The *Gayatri Mantra* actually consists of four feet The Mantra runs thus:

*Om Bhoorbhuvassuvaha! Tatsaviturvareneeyam,*
*Bhargo Devasya dheemahi!*
*Dhiyoyonah prachodayaat!*
*Paro rajasi savadom!*

O Lord Supreme that exists for all time to come! May we meditate on you so that we might obtain the great glory of the Lord Savita, that enlightens our intellect! That Supreme being that has created all the worlds including Bhoo, Bhuvah, Suvaha, is none other than He who is symbolised by Om, that Paramatman who enlightens our

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intellect with glory that can dispel the darkness, the spiritual sun (Savita) who is adorable – on him we meditate.

This is the meaning of the first three feet of the Mantra which alone are taught to the Grihastas or householders. The last foot is taught to the advanced aspirants, those who have taken up the path of Sannyasa or the yogic path.

It means: "He who is transcending the effulgence is this." It refers to the reality of Godhead symbolised as Light. It is intended not so much for chanting as for experiencing the exalted stages of intense meditation or Samadhi.

The part "Tatsaviturvareneeyam" implies surrender to the will of the Supreme. It refers to all the regions of Bhoo, Bhuvaha and Suvaha. The second foot "Bhargo devasya dheemahi" refers to the establishment of the Supreme in the heart – "devasya" – implying the holding of the Supreme in the heart. The third foot "Dhiyoyonah prachodayaat" leaves the intellect completely under the guidance of the Supreme and getting enlightenment through intuition. The four-footed complete Gayatri Mantra is of the same import and identical with the Panchadasaaksharee Mantra or the 15–lettered Mantra of the Devi in Sri Vidyopasana.

The Mantra is *"Ka Ae Eela Hreem, Ha Sa Ka Hala Hreem, Sakala Hreem i" Ka Ae Eela Hreem:* O Maya sakti in conjunction with Parabhrahma! Remove my Avidya (ignorance, shyness)!

*Hasaka Hala Hreem:* Let my mind be impelled towards Brahmic career and Tattva and shine with effulgence!

*Sakala Hreem:* Let the Brahmic mind and career be kindled by the removal of the Avidya permeating me!

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Thus each of the three parts of Sri Vidya is equal to the parts of the Gayatri Mantra.

| | I | II | III |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Agni* | *Surya* | *Soma (Chandra)* |
| *Tatsavitur vareneeyam* | *KA Ae* | *Hasa* | *Sa* |
| *Bhargo-devasya-dheemahi* | *Ee La* | *KA Hala* | *Kala* |
| *Dhiyo-yonah-prachodayaat* | *Hreem* | *Hreem* | *Hreem* |
| *Parorajasi Savadom* | *Hreem* | | |

Analysing the Mantras again, we find the following balance between the two:

| *Vaagbhavakoota* | *Tatsavitur vareenyam* | *Bhargo Devsya* | *Dhee Mahi* | *Dhiyoyo-nahpra-chodayaat Paroraja-sisava-dom* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | *Ka Ae* | *Ee (Sivamurti)* | *La* | *Hreem* |
| *Kamarajakoota* 6 | *Hasaka* | *Ha* | *La* | *Hreem* |
| *Saktikoota* 4 | *Sa* | *Ka* | *La* | *Hreem* |

*Parorajasi savadom: Hreem:* That which has to be worshipped as Parabrahman distinct from Sakti.

Thus it is evident that the same eternal Brahman is contemplated upon in both the Gayatri and Sri Vidya.

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There is close correspondence between the Mantra and the various parts of a man's body.

First foot: *Saviturvareneeyam:* leading to production, existence and extinction corresponds to two feet, two forelegs, two hands and the two organs of evacuation.

Second foot: *Bhargodevasya dheemahi* refers to sustenance with the head as the leader, namely, mind along with the two lungs, the heart, the liver, the kidney, the spleen, the intestine, and the stomach – eight in number.

Third foot: *Dhiyoyonah prachodayaat:* is an appeal for enlightenment comprising the head having two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth and intellect–eight in number.

That is why the scriptures prescribe that the aspirant must be completely free from any defect of behaviour or mind. He has to take a vow of continence and practise it to perform Gayatri Japa.

The 24 departments of knowledge correspond to the 24 syllables of the Gayatri Mantra. So one who utters the Mantra regularly and performs the Japa with complete devotion will certainly become proficient in all the departments of knowledge – the four Vedas, the six Vedangas, the four upavedas and six darsanas – all totalling to 24. He will becomes a sage par excellence by concentrating on the Truth. The fourth foot leads him to realise the Self.

As described in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Gayatri is in the body as well as in the universe. There are in the human body organs and centres of energy that correspond to the various deities. The Gayatri is the effective means to bring about the harmonious attunement of the two. It is indeed in all beings. All that exist are in it. Truly it is Vak

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or speech. Vak sings (Gayatri) and protects (Trayati) all that seek its aid. It is the earth. In it is everything established. Nothing transcends it . The earth again is the body in man. In it the Pranas are established and do not go beyond it. The Gayatri four-footed is of six forms (all beings, Vak, Earth, Body, Heart and Prana). Greater than it is the Paramatman. The first of this is all beings, three feet of his are immortal, in heaven. This Brahman is the Akasa around the man which is the Akasa within the heart with five divine gates of Prana, Vyana, Apana, Samana and Udana.

The east gate – Prana – is the eye, which is the Sun. Meditate on this as light, as god. He who knows this becomes healthy and bright.

The southern gate – vyana – is the moon. Meditate on this as happiness, as fame.

The western gate – apana – speech – Agni. Meditate on this as Brahmavarchas – the effulgent appearance of Brahman.

The southern gate – Samana – represents Manas – Parjanya. Meditate on this as fame and beauty. The upper gate – Udana – Vayu – Akasa element. Meditate on this as power (Ojas and greatness).

That light which shines beyond Heaven, beyond Universe, beyond everything in the highest world i.e. the world beyond which there is no higher, is the same light as the light within man.

That is to be realised through Gayatri Japa.

In order that Gayatri Japa may culminate in yoga, upasaka has to go through three stages. Firstly there should be repetition being conscious

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of the sounds that form the Mantra . Secondly the meaning of every word of the Mantra must be understood very well. Lastly the whole meaning of the Mantra, leaving behind the words in the background must be grasped firmly.

This will conduce to one going beyond the idea envisaged by the Mantra, realise the truth behind it and enter into Samadhi.

Every Mantra has a Rishi or seer who has realised it, the Cchandas or the metre in which it is to be uttered and the Devata or deity encompassed in the Mantra. So before a Mantra is taken in, there is a Viniyoga Mantra to take the permission of the Rishi, Cchandas and Devata of the Mantra to make it fruitful.

For the whole Gayatri Mantra Viswamitra is the Rishi, Gayatri is Cchandas and Savita is the Devata.

The following shows the Rishi, Cchandas and Devata for the three vyahritis: Bhoo, Bhuvaha, Suvaha and Gayatri:

| | Rishi | Cchandas | Devata |
|---|---|---|---|
| Om Bhooh | Brahma | Gayatri | Agni |
| Bhuvah | Prajapati | Ushnik | Vayu |
| Suvaha | | Anushtup | Aditya |
| Gayatri Mantra | Viswamitra | Gayatri | Savita |

Gayatri is the Cchandas for Om, the first Vyahriti and the Gayatri Mantra. The Cchandas for the whole Mantra is Gayatri.

The Devata Agni is common to Prana and the first Vyahriti Bhooh. Agni has the power to destroy illusion and

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ignorance. Similarly the Devatas of the second and third Vyahritis are Vayu and Aditya who promote vitality and shedding of light respectively. Through the ten names: Om, Bhooh, Bhuvaha, Suvaha, Tat, Savitur, Vareneeyam, Bhargo, Devasya and Dhee, the Surepeme Lord is prayed to. Savita is the Chief deity addressed to in this Mantra. This Savita is the impeller, the driving force behind the cosmos, the force which sustains the sun, which makes Agni and Indra discharge their functions. The outer sun is only the physical vehicle of the mighty all-knowing Chit which pervades the solar system with indescribable glory. The word Bhargo stands for the 33 Devatas corresponding to the planets and the stars. *Bhar* means to fulfil or energise. *Go* means the breath, the earth, the sun, the moon, the rays, speech, mind, etc. *Bhargo* also indicates the 33 types of wealth.

After the import of these words are taken in, the Japa of the Mantra will help fully. But to get complete success, the Devi is to be invoked through the Avahana Mantra by which Her presence is enshrined in our heart. The Avahana Mantra says: "Salutations to the Gayatri Devi, the precious mother who grants all boons desired, who is known by the Vedas and who is the mother of the Vedas. I pray that you be pleased to give audience to me and accept this devotional Veda Mantra hymn of praise. You are the very embodiment of the power of Prana as well as the power of senses. You are the power that consumes the enemy of the light of divine wisdom, the resplendent form of the brightness of the Devi, the form of the universe, the age of the universe and hence the form of time, one who has conquered all. You, Gayatri Devi, are the incarnation of Pranava. I pray for your darshan. You, Savita Devi, I pray to you for your benign presence. You, Saraswati Devi, I pray for your darsan."

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Thus creating the *sannidhya* or presence of the Devi, one should proceed with the Mantra. Let us meditate on God (Savita) and his glory (Devasya) who has created the universe, who is fit to be worshipped (Vareneeyam) who is the remover of all sin and ignorance (Bhargo). May he enlighten our intellect. The Mantra requires initiation from a competent Guru to be truly effective.

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# KULACHIRAI NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples.)*

*"Mahesam Suresam Suraaraatinaasam*
*Vibhum Viswanatham Vibhootyangabhoosham*
*Viroopaakshamindwarkavahni trinetram*
*Sadaanandameede Prabhum Panchavaktram".*

Salutations are offered to Lord Mahesa, the Lord of the Devas, the annihilator of the enemies of the gods, the Lord of the Universe and of everything, the one adorned with the sacred ash all over the body, the three eyed one with the sun, the moon, and the firegod forming the eyes, the five faced Lord. May he grant eternal bliss!

The Lord certainly gratifies the desire of the earnest devotee who prays to him soulfully without any sort of reservation whatsoever. Kulachirai Nayanar was such a devotee. He did his duty perfectly while his mind always dwelt on Lord Paramasiva. He was a native of Manamelkudi, a village in Pandyanadu. He became minister to the king of Madurai. He was respected by everyone for his piety and wisdom. He served the interest of the state wholeheartedly without any bias. He was equally good to the rich and the poor, the high and the low properly entertaining them. Any person wearing the sacred ash and uttering the holy name of Lord Siva received royal treatment from him. The name of "Siva" stirred him deeply. He fed any number of saivite sadhus that came to him. He was very liberal towards them.

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He managed the affairs of the state very capably and subjugated all the adversaries of the king. The state was free, worryfree and carefree under his dispensation. But one thing made him feel sore. The Jains held sway over the king and the saivites were sometimes harassed. The king himself being a Jain, the Nayanar felt out of sorts. But the queen Pandimadevi, was of his persuasion of mind. He heard about the greatness of that spiritual dynamite Tiru Gnanasambandha Nayanar and wanted to seek his help in the matter. Together with the queen, he sent an invitation to Sambandhar to come over to Madurai and establish saiva dharma. Sambandha Nayanar entered Madurai and Challenged the Jains to prove their superiority over saivism. They tried in vain to do so. Sambandar crushed every argument of theirs. When they failed to win by arguments, they tried other methods. They tried to fire his abode. Sambandhar thought that the king was at the base of it. So he turned it into a fiery fever afflicting the king. The king hurried to Sambandhar and surrendered to him. The saint asked him to try if the Jains could cure him. The Jains could do nothing. Then Sambandhar gave vibhooti to the king uttering the name of Lord Siva. The king was instantly cured. The Jains tried to persuade the king not to leave their fold. But they miserably failed to convince him. Sambandhar's exposition of Saivism had a telling effect on the Jains, none could meet his arguments. Many of them immolated themselves and the rest were converted into saivism. Sambandhar praised the sterling devotion of Kulachirai Nayanar who was thus instrumental in spreading the gospel of Lord Siva through him. He regarded Kulachirai Nayanar as the chosen of Lord Siva to uphold the pristine glory of the Lord. The queen of Pandyanadu was indeed blessed. Tirugnana Sambandhar honoured Kulachirai Nayanar with the title Peru Nambi.

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He also sang a hymn praising the nayanar and the queen. Kulachirai Nayanar served the Lord to the end of his life with great devotion and attained the lotus feet of the Lord. Any one who is fired with such a missionary zeal to propagate the tenets of the Lord is sure to attain him. So let us pray to that Lord for such a strength of mind and effort:

*Deena Maanavaali Kaamadhenave Namassivaaya*
*Soonabaana daaha drukkrusaanave Namassivaaya*
*Swaanuraaga bhaktaratna saanave Namassivaya*
*Daanavaandhakaara chandabhaanave Namassivaaya!*

I salute the Lord who is the Kamadhenu of the oppressed and the depressed mankind. I salute the one who destroyed the flowerarrowed god of Love, by fire. I offer my worship to the one who polishes the devotee gems leading them to spiritual brightness. I bow to the Lord who is the strong-rayed sun dispelling the darkness caused by miscreant giants.

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## SRI NEELAKANTA NAYANAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La-Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his disciples)*

*Namo bhootanaadham Namo devadevam Namahkaa-*
*lakaalam Namo divyatejam*
*Namah kaamabhasmam Namssaantaseelam Bhaje*
*paarvateevallabham neelakantam!*

Salutations are offered to Lord Neelakanta, the husband of Goddess Parvati, the Lord of the bhootas, the Lord of the devas, the one with divine effulgence, who had burnt the god of love to ashes, who put an end to the god of death and who is peace personified.

Lord Neelakanta is full of compassion towards every one. The person who is always of his mind is sure to get his protection and redemption. This was illustrated in the case of Sri Neelakanta Nayanar to the full. In Chidambaram there was a young man of the potter community. He spoke always about Lord Neelakanta who swallowed the dreadful poison of Haalaahala to save the whole creation from being wiped out. As a result he was himself called Neelakanta and his original name was forgotten. He was very principled and godfearing. He worshipped the devotees of Lord Siva and entertained them in his house. He never uttered a lie. He was not after money. He baked only as many pots as were required for his sustenance and for his hospitality to the devotees of the Lord. He was always thinking of the lotus feet of Lord Neelakanta who danced in his heart.

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Once as fate would have it he committed an indiscretion. He went to the house of a dancing girl and spent the night with her. He came home as usual as if nothing had happened. His wife found out the truth. She did not however rate him for it. She did her duties towards him as usual, but did not allow him to come near her when he wanted union with her. She laid a vow on Lord Neelakanta and said that he should not touch her thereafter. Neelakanta realised his folly and he kept his distance from her in that matter. He prayed to god to forgive him for his sin. This episode was not known to any one. They behaved as usual in other things. Their hospitality to Sivabhaktas continued as usual. His recital of Lord Neelakanta's greatness also continued as before. They both became old. They led a celibate life.

The Lord wanted to make their worth known to the world and take them into his fold. So he took the form of a saivite sage and came to their house. They treated him with great respect and love and requested him to take food in their house. He agreed. He gave a mudpot to Neelakanta and asked him to keep it secure and look after it till his return from his bath. It was very precious to him. Neelakanta accordingly took it, kept it at a safe place and busied himself making preparations for providing all the necessities for the enter tainment of the sage. The sage came after his bath. He asked for his mudpot. Neelakanta went to get it from its place of safekeeping. To his consternation he did not find it there. He searched high and low for it in vain. His wife also helped him in the search. Their chagrin was great. He presented himself before the sage and told him about its loss. He offered to make a fresh pot and give it to him. He begged for his pardon. The sage was very angry. He shouted at Neelakanta saying typically like an irate man imposed upon by a crook that he was an impostor in a

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holyman's guise and evil by nature. The pot was dearer to him than his life. Neelakanta should return it at once. The poor Neelakanta begged the sage to state an alternative as the pot was nowhere to be found.

The sage said that Neelakanta and his wife were to hold their hands together, enter the tank, bathe and swear that they were not at fault in the matter. Now Neelakanta was at his wit's end. He said that he could not touch his wife due to a certain reason. He could singly comply with the order of the sage. The latter fretted and fumed. He said that he would go for justice in the matter to the assembly of brahmins at Chidambaram. So saying he walked off with Neelakanta and his wife following greatly agitated at the turn of events. The brahmins heard what the sage had to say. They declared that Neelakanta should take the hand of his wife and together they should bathe and come out. After that they should make the declaration demanded by the sage. Then Neelakanta got his wife there and bringing a bamboostick he asked her to hold one end while he held the other to go into the tank and bathe. The sage objected to it. He said there should be no bamboo stick between them. They should hold their hands actually. Now Neelakanta felt that he could no longer hide the truth and so described to the audience how he could not touch his wife on account of an indiscretion committed by him. The crowd were amazed at it. when they looked towards the sage, the latter was not there. A voice was heard from the sky. All looked up. There was the Lord Neelakanta on his mount along with Goddess Parvathi. The Lord said: "Neelakanta! You and your wife are my peerless devotees. I am pleased with your austere behaviour. I have tested you. Come on both of you to Kailas!" So saying the Lord took both of them to his abode. The people present sang aloud in praise of the

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Nayanar and the Lord. Any one who worships the Lord with the same devotion and purity as was shown by Neelakanta Nayanar is sure to attain the grace of the Lord.

So let us pray to him:

*Sadaa teertha siddhamsada bhaktaraksham Sadaa saivapoojyam*

*Sadaasubra bhasmam Sadaa dhyaanayuktam Saada-jnaana talpam Bhajr Paarvateevallabham Neelakantam!*

*Hey Neelakanta! Vrishbhadhwaja! Panchavaktra! Lokesa! Seshavalaya Pramathesa! Sarva!*

*Hey Dhoorjate! Pasupate! Girijaapate! Maam Samsaara dhukkagahanaajjagadeesa raksha!*

Salutations to Lord Neelakanta, Lord of Divine Mother Parvathi, who is in all sacred teerthas, always wedded to the principle of saving the devotees, worshippable always by Saivites, covered with pure and holy ashes, always in meditation and as jnaanamoorti. O Lord Neelakanta! of the flag with the bull ensign, fivemouthed, lord of the universe, encircled by the serpent, Lord of the Pramathas, Sarva with matted locks of hair, Pasupathi, Lord of Girija the daughter of Himavan! Grant me protection in this forest of sorrows of samsara!

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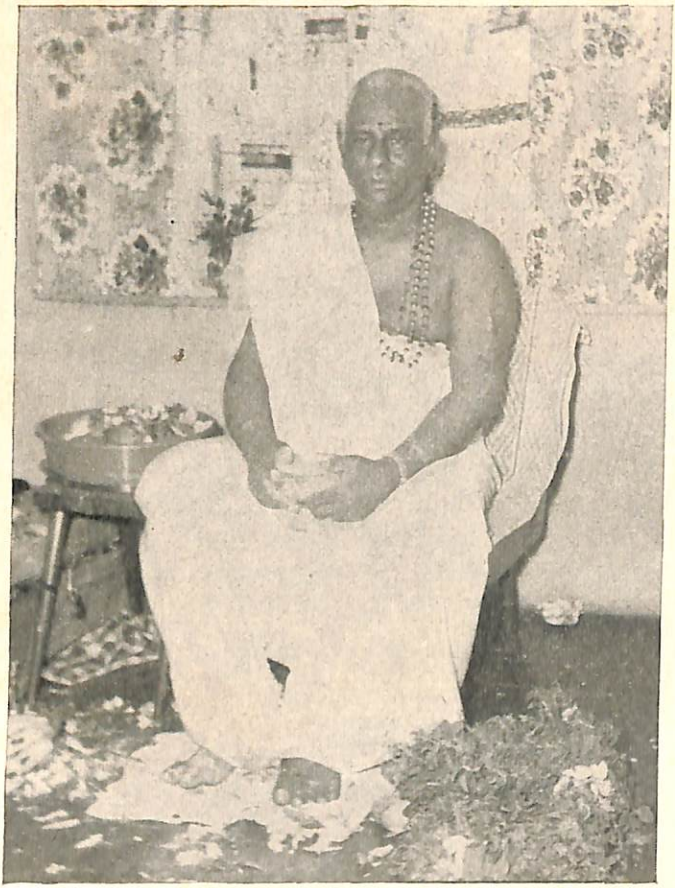

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## KURUMBA NAYANAR

(*Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri La Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to gratify the desire of his Disciples*)

Yogakshema duramdharasya sakalasreyah
pradodyogino
Drushtaadrushta matopadesakrutino
baahyantaravyaapinaha
Sarvajnasya dayaakarasya bhavataha
kimveditavyam mayaa
Sambho Tvam paramaantaranga iti me
chitthe smaraamyanvaham !

"O Lord Sambho ! You look to the safety and wellbeing of the universe as your burden of love. Your profession is to gift all benefits to all creatures. You are the skilled Allknower with the ability of imparting teachings that are conducive to this worldly and other worldly welfare. You are the Allmerciful. What is it that I can make known to you ? I am daily meditating upon you with the firm belief that you are the best confidant of mine."

Being of the Lord's mind and working with dedication in the service of the Lord's devotees are the twin engines that propel us to the Lord's lotus feet with terrific speed.

Kurumba Nayanar was such a distinguished worshipper of the Lord Siva and his devotees. He believed that the Lord is propitiated when his devotees are well cared for and served. Kurumba Nayanar made it his virtue to do so.

He was the chieftain of Mizhalainadu. His place of habitation was Perumizhalai. As king, so subjects. His people were holy and good. Consequent upon his earnest

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devotion and worship of the Lord and his followers, he developed extraordinary powers of intuition. He could divine what was in the minds of the persons before him. Whenever he found holy men come to him, he could know what they wanted and provided them with all that they desired at heart. He anticipated all their needs and spared no pains to fulfil them. He catered to their proper entertainment feeling that Lord Siva was in them manifest and that he was serving his ishta daiva through them.

The holy bard of Saivism, Saint Sundarar, sang Tiru ThondaTokai-the garland of hymns paying tribute to the holy servants of the Lord of Tillai. Kurumba Nayanar was enamoured of it. He regarded the Saint Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar as his philosopher, guide and master. He became the saint's ardent follower and worshipper. He took the hymns to be his gospel and sang them over and over again. He uttered the holy Panchakshara time in and time out and developed yogic powers.

The time came for his exit from this mundane world. He heard that Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar was to go on a white elephant to Kailas and the time was fixed for it. He was filled with intense chagrin and sorrow. He loved Sri Sundarar so intensely that he decided to himself go in his astral form to Kailas leaving his mortal frame by his yogic powers well in advance to receive Sri Sundarar there. Having determined thus, he sat down in yogic pose and controlling his vital breath, he disengaged himself from his mortal body and flew in astral form to Kailas. There Sri Sundaramurthy Nayanar showered his grace on him and on his intervention, attained the Sannidhya of the Lord. Thus Kurumba Nayanar benefitted by his Acharyopasanam and service to the devotees of the Lord. It behoves us well to follow his shining example and attain the grace of the Lord.

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## SRI MANIKYAVACHAKAR

*(Vouchsafed to Aasaan Sadguru Sri-La- Sri Pandrimalai Swamighal to satisfy the desire of his disciples)*

*"Vamde Suraanam saaramcha Suresam Neelalohitam*
*Yogesswaram Yogabeejam Yoginaamcha Gurorgurum*
*Gnaanaanamdam Gnaanaroopam Gnaanabeejam*
*Sanaatanam*
*Tapasaam phaladaataaram Dataaram Sarvasampadaam*
*Bhaktajeevanameesamcha Bhaktaanugrahakaataram*
*Vedaanasaktaayam stotum Kimaham Stowmitam*
*Prabhum!"*

I salute you, Lord Paramasiva : the essence of all gods, the God of gods, the Lord of Yogins, the seed of Yoga, the preceptor of the Yogins and the First Guru and master of all gurus, enjoying the bliss of Jnaana, of the shape of Jnaana, the primal cause of Jnaana, the ancient eternal Lord who grants all gifts when penance is offered to him, and the giver of all riches. You are the lifespirit of the devotees, the Lord always solicitous anxious to shower your grace on them. Even the Vedas are unable to praise your eminence. While so how can I utter prayers adequately praising you? O Lord!

Lord Siva is the highest of the highest gods and he is at once the life and refuge of his devotees. It is difficult for anyone to praise his glorious qualities properly and fully. But even so there is the saint singer who praised the Lord and earned the name" Manikyavachakar" – one whose

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utterances are rubies. His hymns of praise to the Lord go by the name of "Tiruvachakam" – divine utterance. He was chosen by the Lord to praise him and describe his glory. The saintsinger says in his 188th song of Hymn V of Tiruvachakam Decad V:

*"Endaiyyaay, Embiran, Matrum Yaavarukkum*
*Tamdai, Taay, Tambiraan, Tanakkahtilaan*
*Mundi Yennul pugundanan, Yaavarum*
*Chindaiyaalum arivarung selvane!"*

In this rhapsody the saint says that the everblissful Lord whom none can know by thoughts, father and mother to all besides, sire, mother, had sought him out from all the devotees and entered within his inmost soul. He had earned that merit whereby the Lord of Lords selected him as the fittest instrument to sing his praise and make all humans benefitted by it. The saint was the first and main pillar of Saivism and his advent sounded the death knell for Buddhism, Jainism and other creeds. He was born in Tiruvaadavoor on the river Vaigai near Madurai. He was given the name Tiruvaada Voorar – 'he of the sacred place called Tiruvaadavoor.' He was a brahmin of the Amatya tribe. He was very intelligent, scholarly and highly learned in Saiva Agamas. His name and fame spread far and wide. The king of Madurai at the time, Arimarttanar, came to know about him. He called for Tiruvadavoorar and was so impressed with his deep scholarship and pious disposition that he became enamoured of him and made him the minister-in-chief. He honoured the young prodigy, with the title Tennavan Brahma Rayan, the Brahmin king of the Pandyan.

The sagacious and pious youth was the most excellent devotee of Lord Siva and his mind pined for the Lord though

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he was surrounded on all sides by affluence, luxury and comfort. Though his will was law and his power absolute, he kept 'samatva', the principle of equality of all, with an astonishing balance of mind, a precious gift of the Lord to him. He was like King Janaka of old. He was fired by one supreme desire in his soul. He intensely longed for a spotless Guru who could teach him the secret of the sacred Panchakshari mantra and free him from the bondage of samsara. But for every thing to fructify there is a proper time or *'samuchita samaya'*. At the appropriate time the Lord deigns to fulfil the desire of the true devotee. He is always readily disposed to do so. He therefore goes by the attribute "Bhaktaanugraha Kaataram".

Now the due time came for the consummation of the desire of the young and saintly chief minister. The Lord in Kailas announced to the deities round him that he was going down into the world assuming the form of a preceptor to regenerate his devotee, convert him and gift him with self-realisation so that he would make the love of the Lord permeate all over converting everyone to his fold, teaching the Truth that the Lord was and making Tamil for ever glorious and brilliant with the ambrosia of holy and devout poesy of the grandest order. He accordingly descended to the earth taking the shape of a Saivite Guru with his 999 saintly attendants following him in the guise of disciples. He made his abode under a spreading Kuruntham tree in a grove around the city of Tiruperunturrai.

News spread to Madurai that rare horses of pristine standard were available there. The king of Madurai was fired with a desire to possess those master steeds. So he entrusted his confidential minister Sri Manikkyavachakar with the onerous task of going to Tiruperunturrai, purchasing the horses and bringing them over

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to Madurai. He gave an enormous treasure for the purpose to the saintly minister or the steeds were highly costly. Sri Manikyavachakar travelled in all grandeur and pomp attended upon by a military escort to the western port never dreaming that the most crucial point in his life was about to be reached and his desire was about to be fulfilled. He reached Tiruperunturrai and hearing the sacred hymns praising Lord Siva issuing out of the grove, he stopped his procession and got in. He was taken in by the majestic and awe-inspiring Adiguru, Lord Siva, in human form. Then and there he renounced everything in the Guru's favour and pronounced himself to be his disciple. He became a mendicant ascetic and worshipped the sacred feet of the preceptor. He made over the fabulous treasure given by his king to purchase the horses to the Guru. His retinue were aghast at the transformation. They remonstrated with him to no purpose. So they went back to Madurai and told the king what had happened. The king was highly enraged on receipt of the news and he sent orders to Sri Manikyavachakar to return at once with his emissaries. But the latter was in no mood to do so. He said that he recognised none to be his overlord. He was in the state of mind of the devotee who prayed:

*"Tvameva Maataacha Pitaa Tvameva,*
*Tvameva Bandhuscha Sakhaa Tvameva,*
*Tvameva Vidyaa Dravinam Tvameva*
*Tvameva Sarvam Mama Devadeva!"*

He was in the world of Siva. He said that he would not fear any one as the Vanquisher of the God of Death was his protector. However he acquainted his Guru with the order of the king. The latter, smiling affectionately, asked him to obey the order, go to the king and state that

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the horses were purchased, that the time was not propitious to march them to Madurai and so he could not bring them along with him then and that the 19th day of Avani would be the appropriate auspicious time for their arrival at Madurai. Sri Manikyavachakar was instructed to say that the horses would reach Madurai on that day positively. The Guru gave a brilliant ruby to be presented to the king in token of submission and said that everything would go on well. Accordingly Sri Manikyavachakar went with the king's messengers as grandly as he had come from Madurai but very sad at parting with his Guru who was to him Lord Siva himself and took a permanent abode in his heart. The king was very pleased with the account of Sri Manikyavachakar and with the gift of the extraordinary ruby. He took the saint once again into his position of chief minister and everything went on smoothly for some time.

But when there were just two days more for the arrival of the horses as promised by the saintly minister, the king was influenced by his non-saiva courtiers who made him believe that the saint had misappropriated the king's treasure and gave it to some Saivite beggar. As kings go, this king wayward in his resolution ordered Sri Manikyavachakar to be thrown into prison again to be kept there till the treasure was restored to the king's coffers. The saint prayed to the Lord who heard his outpourings and came to his succour. The Lord transformed himself into a merchant dealing in horses, made his attendants take the shape of grooms and changed a number of jackals of the forest into the finest type of horses. They were led to Madurai. The news reached the ears of the king who felt repentant and released the saint forthwith. He restored the latter to his position of power and they both inspected

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the horses. The saint could recognise his Guru in the merchant but could not speak to him. The king was pleased with the horses and took them over after rewarding the merchant and his attendants who took his gifts with marked indifference and left. But this happiness for the saint was shortlived. In the night the horses changed into jackals once again, made terrible howling noises devoured the other horses and escaped into the woods, The king was furious and thinking that it was a trick played upon him by Sri Manikyavachakar ordered him to be severely punished. He ordered that the saint should be tortured in the burning sun till the treasures were recovered in full from him. Accordingly the saint was taken to the Vaighai river, made to stand in the burning sands carrying a heavy stone on his back and exposed to the horrible heat of the sun every day. The saint prayed to the Lord as he suffered the penalty. The Lord who is the ocean of mercy thereupon caused Mother Ganges to fill up the Vaighai and inundate Madurai where the saint was being tormented. The flood assumed alarming proportions and the city of Madurai appeared to be in danger of being submerged. The king became afraid. He thought it happened so as he had punished the saint. He released the saint, begged him for his forgiveness and reappointed him as his minister-in-chief praying to him to take the necessary steps to save the city from going under water. As per the instructions of the saint,orders were passed that the residents of the city should build a dam for the purpose and all without exception should work at it. Every one was assigned a portion of the dam to be built.

In the city was a poor woman called Semmana Selvi who eked her livelihood by selling rice cakes. She was too weak and old for the work. Nor could she have any

one to substitute for her due to her abject poverty. She made haste to Chokkanayagar's temple and supplicated before the Lord praying, "Siva, Sarvaga, Sarva, Sarmada Pranato Deva dayam kurushvame! Nama Easwara Naatha, Dikpate! Punarevesa Namonamostute!"; – O Lord! Siva! existent in all, I bow unto you! Show your kindness to me!, she prayed fervently. Her pathetic appeal had its effect. Just outside the temple she found the Lord disguised as a worker poorly clad and having a basket on his head for carrying earth with a spade on his shoulder. He acsosted her and requested her to give him food in return for which he was prepared to do whatever action was required of him. The old lady was beside herself in ecstasy of joy at the immediate fulfilment of her prayer to the Lord. She did not know that it was the merciful Lord alone that was before her in that guise. She gladly engaged him. The Lord as the labourer played eccentric pranks. He ran hither and thither doing little work and singing wildly. The work-inspectors declared him to be a mad person. But the wonder of wonders was that the river went back to its restricted limits knowing him to be the Lord. The labourer crowned his laziness by lying down and falling asleep putting his basket as a pillow under his head. He was hauled up before the king for his indolent and impudent behaviour. He would not defend himself. The king became irate and ordered him to be beaten. As the blow fell on the Lord, the whole Universe felt it. Every god felt it. All the court felt it. At–once the Lord disappeared. The king realised his foolishness and he felt miserable thinking that he had sinned against the Lord. He rushed to Sri Manikyavachakar, feeling utterly inconsolable fell prostrate before him and begged to permit him to resign his kingship. The saint was beside himself with grief that the Lord was thus debased and belaboured.

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He told the king to pray for the mercy of the Lord and rule in his name when he would get peace of mind. As for himself, he wanted to be left free to return to Tiruperunturrai wherein he decided to dwell at the divine feet of the Lord undisturbed by mundane affairs. The king had to agree to it. The saint lost no time in going to his preceptor and joining his service with great zeal and devotion. He thereupon engaged himself in singing the praise of the Lord.

After some time the Lord who was all along in human shape with him announced his departure from the world and said that his disciples 999 in number had to wait patiently till fire appeared in the sacred tank nearby wherein they had to throw themselves and reach him in their divine bodies. The saint was told that he had to wait still further in the world, establish the kingdom of the Lord in the world and compose sacred thrilling hymns in Tamil which would form the Vedas of the South. The Lord gave him special instructions to go from temple to temple and reach Chidambaram where he would attain eternal salvation after annihilating the creed of the Buddhists. After the Lord's departure, the attendants waited for the day of redemption. As foretold by the Lord, a sacred fire rose up in the holy tank and they threw themselves into it and reached the blissfull abode of the Lord in Kailas. The saint was pensive as he was not allowed to follow them. Then he rallied and uttered wonderful poems pouring out his heart's agony at the separation from his Lord. He pondered over his past experiences, thought of the work allotted to him by the Lord and lamented at the delay in attaining oneness with the gracious divine light. His feelings are recorded in the Tiruvachakam, Bhaktivairagya Vichittiram.

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After sometime he began visiting temples dedicated to Lord Siva, worshipped him and composed poems in his glory. Finally he arrived at Chidambaram which he made his permanent abode. He wrote wonderful hymns in praise of the Lord of Tillai. His devotional ecstasy found full play in the ennobling presence of the Eternal Dancer whose feet danced in the heart of the saint. Most of his divine hymns were composed here and they reveal the glory of Lord Siva. They contain the quintessence of Saivism. In the Tiruvachakam, the Moonraavadu (Hymn III) entitled "Tiruvandappagidi," (the nature and development of Universe) ranks with the Sanskrit Satarudreeya hymns. It delineates the auspicious qualities of the Lord who is Sarvagata and Sarvajna-incomprehensible to any one, divine or not. No one could really know him and his real nature. He is the Supreme. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer too evolving the phenomena of aeons rolling out with the Universe being formed and dissolved in cycles. Sri Manikyavachakar expounded the Saivite principles to perfection. He was all engrossed in visualising the glory of the Lord dancing for ever with the divine Mother. He sang: "Prapancha Srustyunmukha Laasyakaayai, Samasta Samhaaraka Taandavaaya, Samekshanaayai Vishamekshanaaya, Namassivaayaicha Namassivaaya!"! – I salute the Mother Sivaa who eternally dances the dance called Laasya which procreates and the Father Siva who always dances his Taandava measure which dissolves creation. I bow to the even-eyed Mother and the odd-eyed Father. This blissful vision was always before his mind and he went on composing songs in praise of Lord Siva in Tamil. They have the potency of the Sanskrit hymns and are very endearing to the Lord.

In the meantime while the saint was so absorbed, a Buddhist Guru with a host of disciples following him came

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to Chidambaram from Ceylon for establishing the supremacy of his creed over Saivism. He camped in the temple precincts. The King of Ceylon also arrived there with his tributes to the Chola King. He was also there with the purpose of establishing the sway of Buddhism. The devotees of Lord Nataraja were in panic. They first thought of expelling the strangers. But on the bidding of the Lord, the Chola king approached the saint Sri Manikyavachakar who was in a nearby asrama in deep contemplation of the Lord. The prayer of the Chola king and the devotees of the Lord was heeded by the saint as it was his mission to establish the tenets of the Lord on a secure and firm footing in the world. The scene of the debate was a sight for gods to witness. The saint and the Buddhist Guru argued at great lingering length. In the end being vexed with the recriminations against the Lord indulged in the talk by the Buddhist Guru, the saint turned to Vageeswari Saraswati, the goddess of speech, and asked her why she, residing on the tongue of Lord Brahma, should permit those persons to speak ill of the Eternal Lord by their power of speech. At once the Buddhist Guru and his followers became dumb being made bereft of speech by the goddess. This miracle had a salutary effect on all. The Ceylonese King was won over by the arguments of the saint in disproving the religion of the Buddhists and by the miracle that happened. He openly embraced Saivism declaring his faith in Lord Siva. He appealed to the saint to make his daughter who was dumb regain her power of speech. Sri Manikyavachakar made a soulful prayer to the Lord of Tillai to gratify the desire of the king. The Lord yielded to his importunities and the result was electrifying. The Lord made the dumb princess articulate. She began to speak fluently and tore to pieces the arguments of the Buddhists in favour of their

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creed . This wonder of wonders converted all the Buddhists into ardent devotees of the Lord of Tillai. Thus the saint accomplished the mission entrusted to him by the Lord. He performed his Vangmaya Tapas by composing and singing beautiful and thrilling songs extolling the Lord and expressing the Saiva Tattwa.

The songs "Tiruppadai Yezhucchi;' (the holy march), Tiruppadaiyaatchi" (Jeevopadi ozhital). "Anandamaalai" (Sivaanubhava viruppam), ",Acchoppadikam" (Anubhava vezhariyaamai) reveal the feelings of joy felt by him at the attainment of Siva Arul by all including the heretics who were converted by the grace of the Lord. He spent his time singing the glory of the Lord.He awaited his release from the mortal coils. Once a stranger in the garb of a sannyasin came to him from the Madurai region and prayed to the saint to allow him to take down all his songs directly as uttered by him directly. The sage gladly did so. The stranger vanished immediately after taking down the songs to the utter astonishment of all present. It was the Lord himself who came in that guise. He made all the deities in heaven listen to the songs. The next day the book of songs was found at the base of the image of the Lord of Chidambaram. It had a thousand verses. The devotees were all thunderstruck at the miraculous appearance of the divine script. They sang the songs with great fervour and rapture. They marched straight to the saint and asked him to give them an authoritative meaning and commentary on the matter preached in the book. The saint went along with them to the Lord's golden court. He declared that Tillai Sabhapati was the meaning and commentary of his songs and merged in the image. He had been praying to the Lord to be allowed to reach his abode in Kailas which he had been always

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having before his mind's eye. He sang:

*"Paravuvaar Imaiyorghal Paaduvana Naalvedam*
*Guravuvaar Kuyanmadavaal Koordaiyaaloru bhaagam*
*Viravuvaar Meyyanbin Adiyaargal Menmelum*
*Aravuvaar Kayalinaikal Kaanbaaro? Ariyene!'*

"The residents of heaven chant your praise. So also do the Four Vedas. The Mother Uma with effulgent hair of perfume shares your seat. There all your servants live in true love. There they have the sweet vision of your feet sounding with sounding anklets round them. You are hard to know!"

Now he had got to know Lord by remaining for ever with him. His life is a life of crystal purity dedicated to the Lord's service. He always looked to the Divine Light for guidance. His Tiruvachakam has the force and efficacy of the Geeta of Lord Krishna. I declare hereby that it is a must for every devout person for winning the Lord's grace. Let it be sung by one and all. Salvation comes automatically.

Om Namassivaya!

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